

DOING, UNDOING, AND REDOING COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS:  
CONCEPTUAL TALES OF MARGINALITY AND MATTERING

A Dissertation  
by  
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## **Abstract**

### **DOING, UNDOING, AND REDOING COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS: CONCEPTUAL TALES OF MARGINALITY AND MATTERING**

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This work disrupts the normalization of athletics (big-time sports programs) in higher education and problematizes status-quo issues related to collegiate athletics such as: amateurism, sports careerism, the admission of academically underprepared athletes, academic and athletic rivalry, and escalating athletic expenditures. Primary poststructural theories of language, subjectivity, and power are used, alongside specific textual resources, to interrogate different aspects of the recent academic scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). The theoretical analysis puts to work the poststructural concepts of marginality (Spivak, 1993) and mattering (Butler, 1993) to create a different critique of academics and athletics in higher education. Using writing as a form of analysis, this study is crafted in the form of different tales. The first part of the analysis shows how individuals are marginalized by the operations of the athletic machine and its desire to achieve both notoriety and financial gain. The second analytical tale highlights the critical role race plays in the ways some bodies matter more than others and how the central drive to

achieve financial success marginalizes and exploits individuals. This theoretical analysis draws attention to the marginalization of individuals, the exploitation of student athletes, especially Black male athletes, and the prevalence of racism in collegiate athletics.

Ultimately, poststructural theory and post-qualitative methodology work together to *undo* the ways collegiate athletics is currently *done*. Through this theoretical and methodological *undoing* of collegiate athletics, recommendations are presented as ways of *redoing* collegiate athletics from structural, operational, and socio-cultural standpoints. This study also informs reform efforts related to collegiate athletics including: revised admissions standards, improved developmental education programs, and increased time for degree completion.

## **Acknowledgments**

The love of my husband, Michael Brown, and my children, Parker and Mason Brown, has inspired me and sustained me throughout this academic pursuit. My husband's enduring faith in me and support of my constant projects has given me the strength and space to complete this dissertation. Thank you for being my biggest fan! I hope the realization of this lifelong dream and goal will always help my children to see the value and possibilities offered by education. Education has forever changed my life and I trust education will also positively shape their futures. The stacks of books and papers and the laptop can be put aside, because Mom is finally finished with "the paper." I can now come outside and play!

I express appreciation to my committee members for walking beside me with their support and encouragement during this academic journey. I will always be grateful for my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Alecia Jackson, for showing me new ways of seeing myself and the world around me. She has taught me to write and think in a way I never thought possible. Thank you for seeing something in me that I did not see in myself. I recognize Dr. Chris Osmond for being the first person to introduce me to the words and thinking of Foucault and opening the door for this philosophical endeavor. I am thankful that my path crossed with Dr. Kim Hall when we shared an unforgettable encounter with Spivak during her visit to the Appalachian campus in 2015, which also helped provide an impetus for this work.

I acknowledge the invaluable daily support and encouragement of my friends and colleagues during the course of this dissertation process. I extend special gratitude to Dr. Leslie McKesson for her intellectual partnership during this educational exploration. Lastly, I am grateful for the lifelong relationships I have built with my fellow members of Hickory Cohort #3.

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated in memory of my mother, Kathy Parker, who did not live to read these words, yet, made each one possible.



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Doing, Undoing, and Redoing Collegiate Athletics: Conceptual Tales of Marginality and  
Mattering

**Chapter 1: A Tale of Many Tales**

Just as Spivak (1997) wrote in the translator's preface to *Of Grammatology*, I must also state that this introduction "harbors a lie" (p. x). This introduction is that which came after the literature, the theory, the methodology, and the analysis; thus, it embodies a falsehood. Spivak (1997) described any preface as pure fiction due to the fact that the preface is crafted after the completion of the text. Although this introduction is that which came after the reading, the thinking, and the writing, it also marks the beginning of that which is yet to come through the telling of tales about the paradoxes of academics and athletics in higher education.

When I first encountered philosophy, or when I first "came to theory," (St. Pierre, 2001, p. 142) I knew I was entering a new world, a new space, an unfamiliar territory. My initial encounter with philosophy was through the words of Foucault (1975/1995) in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* during my first semester of the doctoral program. I wondered: What do prisons have in common with education? In my reading of Foucault (1975/1995), I slowly saw the haunting similarities between prisons and schools, as each aim to discipline individuals through control of both the body and the mind. Although I found philosophical works both inspiring and intriguing, I resisted their allure, convinced that theory was not quite within my grasp. I was content to follow a predetermined path toward pragmatism with a plan to conduct a straightforward educational study marked by quantifiable evidence and certain conclusions. While I thought my reading of Foucault (1975/1995) marked the end of my encounter with philosophy, my "coming to theory" (St.

Pierre, 2001, p. 142) had not yet ended. My journey toward a philosophically informed thinking continued in my first qualitative research course, where, once again, I *bumped into* Foucault (1975/1995, 1980). This is also where I met Jackson (2001, 2004) who introduced me to St. Pierre (2001). In my reading about how St. Pierre (2001) “came to theory” (p. 142), it helped me to see how I was also “coming to theory.” By following their reference trails, each person I met guided me to other works and theorists, and hence, my exposure to philosophy expanded. Two theorists who especially spoke to me along the way were Butler and Spivak.

Through reading works by Butler such as *Gender Trouble* (1990/2006), *Bodies that Matter* (1993), and *Undoing Gender* (2004) and Spivak’s (1993) *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, I started to view everything in the world around me in a new way, as if the theorists were walking beside me and thinking with me. This new way of thinking came into sharp relief one day when I was scanning articles in higher education; I saw a headline: “The athletic machine is in charge of the university” (Wolverton & Willingham, 2015). After examining the story more closely, I realized it was an excerpt from an interview with Mary Willingham, the whistleblower from the scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). In the interview, Willingham described the questionable academic tactics to maintain player eligibility and the deliberate advisement practices steering athletes into courses with no academic substance. Willingham’s (2015) reference to the athletic machine reminded me of Spivak’s (1993) *Outside in the Teaching Machine* in which she defined the teaching machine as

the aggregative apparatus of Euro-American university education where weapons for the play of power/knowledge ... are daily put together, bit by bit, according to a



history rather different from our own. One of the structurally functional ruses of this manufacture or putting-together is to give it out as the cottage-industry of ... the ontic, the everyday, the ground of identity. (pp. 58-59)

Just as if Spivak was there tapping me on the shoulder, I realized there are lots of machines in the world similar to the teaching machine described by Spivak (1993). As I further studied research methodologies alongside reading theory, I began to envision how I could take the concepts of Butler (1990/2006, 1993, 2004) and Spivak (1993) to problematize the presence of athletics on college campuses in the shape of my dissertation project. I realized that I could borrow Spivak's (1993) concept of "the teaching machine" (p. ix) and propose a similar labeling of big-time sports programs in higher education as the *athletic machine*. That is, due to both the prominence and dominance of contemporary college sports programs, I discerned that collegiate athletics, especially the revenue-generating sports, could be labeled as a machine—the athletic machine.

Prior to my "coming to theory" (St. Pierre, 2001, p. 142), I viewed collegiate athletics as an unproblematic extra-curricular activity that I personally enjoyed watching and attending. After a familiarity with theory, I now see the existence of academics and athletics in higher education as a paradox. Viewing collegiate athletics through a critical theoretical lens helped me form the overarching question of my study: What does collegiate athletics do? The *doings* of collegiate athletics are evident through the contradictory positioning of student athletes as both students and athletes, which creates an inherent conflict between academics and athletics in higher education. I characterize this conflict as the paradoxes of academics and athletics in higher education, which is the focus of my dissertation study. My interest in the intersections of theory and methodology has driven me toward a

philosophically informed study as a way to both *undo* and *redo* the ways collegiate athletics is currently *done*. Thus, my encounter with the scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) serves as the experimental site for my dissertation project. I take textual resources related to this scandal at UNC as the topic of inquiry further examined using the concepts of marginality from Spivak (1993) and mattering from Butler (1993). Employing these philosophical concepts, my research questions posed as part of this study are:

- How can the viewing of big-time sports programs as the athletic machine disrupt the acceptance of athletics in higher education?
- How can the concept of marginality be used to see how individuals are *outside in* the athletic machine?
- In the field of collegiate athletics, and more specifically at UNC, how do bodies emerge as those that matter—and why?
- How can the concept of mattering disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics?

The purpose of my study is to disrupt the status quo in the field of collegiate athletics by unsettling both the acceptance and privileging of athletics (big-time sports programs) inside higher education. To enact this disruption, I examine this privilege through poststructural theories of marginality (Spivak, 1993) and mattering (Butler, 1993). I am troubled about how the athletic machine's controlling proclivities force student athletes *inside* a system which commands their performance on the court and field; yet, the same system relegates them to the *outside* of the classroom by limiting the time available for academic endeavors. More precisely, I am disturbed by the athletic machine's marginalization and exploitation of student athletes in favor of athletic success. Of further

concern, I am interested in how the athletic machine produces individuals as subjects and marks them as racialized and gendered beings. I am especially concerned about how race contributes to the performative demands of the athletic machine.

In relation to this particular project, the presence of athletics in higher education is, in many ways, accepted as *the way it is*. By *the way it is*, I am also referring to the presence of athletics and big-time sports programs on college campuses as an accepted way of life or more accurately, the status quo. The status quo, in this case, is the supposed parallel and equal existence of athletics and academics in higher education. I argue that we must begin to question its accepted presence or more accurately, its entrenchment within the field of higher education as well as its unproblematic, binary positioning of student athletes disguised as students first, while primarily performing as athletes.

In my reading of recent literature on collegiate athletics, I interpret collegiate athletics as rooted in an inherent paradox where athletics are juxtaposed against academics (Benedict & Keteyian, 2013; Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011; Feldman, 2007; Harrison, 2000; Lewis, 2010; Nixon, 2014; Rhoden, 2006; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010). An exchange of scholarship for athletic performance creates an impossibility of equality on the scale of academic justice. That is, the production of the student athlete has set the stage for a tug of war between the academy and athletics. As the athletic machine represents the convergence of organized money and sport inserted into higher education institutions, the university athletic machine tills up fertile ground for the growth of innumerable academic frauds and scandals. A recent example is the scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), where star athletes were deliberately placed in sham courses to ensure continued player eligibility. I chose the UNC scandal to explore due to its multiplicity, the different

aspects and angles. The irony of the scandal originating out of the African/Afro-American Studies department creates a unique twist or turn to the event. Another distinctive characteristic is the scandal being uncovered by the act of whistleblowing by a female employee within the academic tutoring program.

To provide an initial awareness of this particular scandal, I offer a brief summary as follows:

*For nearly ten years, Mary Willingham was employed by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as a reading specialist and tutor within the academic support program for student athletes. After numerous personal observations of plagiarism and grade inflation, Willingham became suspicious of academic practices used within the university to maintain student athlete eligibility. Willingham learned that the lack of academic integrity reached far beyond isolated incidences of plagiarism and grade inflation to include courses within the African and Afro-American Studies Department known as “paper classes” (Kane, 2012, p. 2). These courses were also known as no-show courses where students were never required to attend lectures or classes, but simply expected to submit one term paper by the end of the course. After her concerns were continually dismissed, Willingham decided to go public to a local newspaper with her account of the corrupt academic practices at the university. As a result of her whistleblowing, Willingham was demoted and later resigned.*

### **The Status Quo of Collegiate Athletics**

An understanding of the beginnings of athletic programs on college campuses can provide the background for the evolution of contemporary big-time sports programs at higher education institutions. Big-time sports programs can be described as athletic programs that both produce high revenues and demand high expenditures at colleges and universities.

Primary examples of big-time sports programs are football and men's basketball (Clotfelter, 2011). The central drive to maintain the academic eligibility of athletes to ensure athletic success creates not only a possibility, but the probability of a privileging of athletics over academics. The drive to succeed in athletics becomes a much more visible measure of success or failure than do the daily happenings inside the classroom (Clotfelter, 2011).

In previous scholarship on collegiate athletics, critiques include amateurism, sports careerism, the admission of underprepared athletes, academic and athletic rivalry, and capital outlays (Benedict & Keteyian, 2013; Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2001; Feldman, 2007; Harrison, 2000; Lewis, 2010; Nixon, 2014; Rhoden, 2006; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010). These critiques represent common sense thinking, or the status quo, in contemporary college sports. Amateurism embodies a noble idea to maintain the purity of athletic competition not tainted by pay for play. This represents the status quo by not questioning why universities immensely profit from the exhibition and entertainment of the collegiate sport enterprise, while student athletes have no rights to share in the profits gained from the use of their images. Sports careerism denotes the aspiration for a professional sports contract, and similarly exemplifies the status quo in collegiate athletics by allowing colleges and universities to serve as the gateway to a professional sports career rather than the site of a college education. The status quo stands not only as *the way it is*, but also as *the way it has always been*. By concealing the early roots of college sports programs and how they have grown to invade the realm of higher education, the status quo gives the appearance of normalcy, an *always already* existence. The complex contradiction of academics and athletics in higher education is worthy of inquiry based on how the high stakes environment of college sports is changing current and future university operations and more specifically,

the education of students. The interrogation of both the acceptance and privileging of athletics in higher education can lead to a new way of thinking about the presence of big-time college sports programs. This new way of thinking — a *undoing* of the status quo — can expose how the athletic machine manipulates the university system by creating the illusion of a parallel existence of academics and athletics in higher education, while its mechanisms actively applaud athletics and marginalize academics. This troubling of the status quo can also lay bare how student athletes are regulated by the operations of the athletic machine, which normalize them as gendered and racialized bodies while also deciding which bodies matter at all.

### **Summary and Rationale for a Poststructural Theoretical Framework**

To embark on a new way of seeing athletics in higher education and to lay the foundation for my poststructural analysis of this dissertation study, I suggest that collegiate athletics functions as a structural apparatus. Because poststructuralism is a critique of structures, it is important for me to first examine the structural aspects of collegiate athletics. My argument is that poststructuralism, as a theoretical framework for this dissertation study, can help break down the structure of collegiate athletics by exposing the tension that exists between academics and athletics. Later in this dissertation (“Chapter 2: A Critical Tale”), I elaborate how collegiate athletics can be signified as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) (Althusser, 1972). I define an ISA as a hegemonic power mechanism by which the State controls the polis through the use of ideology (Althusser, 1972). In relation to my project, the institutional structure of collegiate athletics is formed by the convergence of college and sport. To establish an awareness of how the university athletic machine constitutes individuals as subjects, I explore how ideological state apparatuses (ISAs), in the form of

collegiate athletics, produce student athletes as subjects and how higher education is complicit in the reproduction of the status quo.

To critique a structural identification of collegiate athletics, I use poststructuralism as the theoretical framework for my dissertation study. Poststructuralism helps me expose the societal structures that promote the fixity of language and meaning while limiting the range of available subject positions for individuals. Related to collegiate athletics, poststructural theory offers me a way to study how language constitutes subjects and contributes to their constantly changing identity formations. Poststructuralism also helps me question how power relations are an integral part of the development of embedded systemic mechanisms creating societal injustice. Utilizing poststructural theories of language, subjectivity, and power, I deconstruct how the fundamental desire to obtain athletic championships and maximize sports revenues leads institutions to frequently admit underprepared athletes and compromise academic integrity to maintain player eligibility. Additionally, Spivak's (1993) concept of marginality reveals how quickly the athletic machine exploits student athletes for financial gain. Butler's (1993) concept of mattering also helps me critique how the athletic machine only values the lives of individuals who actively oil its wheels for profit. I expand the usefulness of poststructuralism as a theoretical framework in "Chapter 3: A Poststructural Tale" of this dissertation.

### **The Appropriateness of a Post-Qualitative Methodology**

By engaging the ideas of poststructural thought toward a new way of thinking about collegiate athletics, this exploration of the paradoxes of academics and athletics in higher education represents a move beyond traditional qualitative inquiry. The methodological approach of my study is situated as post-qualitative design as it departs from the positivist

tendencies of traditional qualitative research and employs innovative ways of thinking about data, analysis, and representation (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; St. Pierre, 2011, 2014; Van Maanen, 2011). A post-qualitative methodology is best suited for this approach because its intent is to disrupt established ways of thinking such as the presence of big-time sports programs in higher education. The methodology, later in “Chapter 4: A Tale of Two Frameworks” of this dissertation, opens with a description of the fundamental features of post-qualitative inquiry. This discussion provides the foundation for how a post-qualitative research design can create new and different ways of seeing collegiate athletics, such as how using theory as an analytical tool opens up a topic of study, such as the field of college sports, by interrogating the way it is or the status quo.

### **Analysis and Representation Overview**

The analytical phases of this study include a philosophically-informed thinking process called “thinking with theory” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). “Thinking with theory” facilitates a transformed way of thinking, more precisely in this project—how viewing a cultural and social phenomenon like collegiate athletics through a theoretical lens can trouble the presence of big-time sports programs on college campuses. By studying the philosophical works by Spivak and Butler and *thinking with* these theorists as I read the textual resources about a particular topic in collegiate athletics, the recent scandal at UNC, I was able to question the current ways collegiate athletics is done. I used poststructural theories of marginality and mattering to help me draw attention to how and why big-time sports programs exist on college campuses. My “thinking with theory” about the UNC scandal was developed by using writing as a method of analysis. In other words, I used writing as a method to form my conceptual analysis of collegiate athletics.



My representation is offered in the form of tales, using theoretical concepts by Spivak (1993) and Butler (1993), coupled with a depiction of a typical realist account. Utilizing poststructural theory and post-qualitative methodology, the two conceptual tales present an analysis of the *doings* of collegiate athletics through the event of the recent UNC scandal. By *doings*, I describe the ways collegiate athletics works to marginalize and exploit individuals to obtain success and financial gain. I view poststructural theory as a means to *undo* collegiate athletics toward a refocusing on academics in higher education. I conclude the study by offering ideas of ways collegiate athletics can be *redone* such as modified budgetary procedures, revised admissions policies, and improved developmental education programs.

The first conceptual tale is based on the characterization of collegiate athletics as the athletic machine. Based on this fundamental view of collegiate athletics, the tale also focuses on Spivak's (1993) concept of marginality and what collegiate athletics is *doing* to satisfy the need for victory and profit. Not only does this analysis identify the *doings* of collegiate athletics toward the marginalization of individuals, but most importantly, the purpose of my study is to disrupt the easy acceptance of athletics in higher education. My examination of the UNC scandal also considers how Spivak's concept of marginality can help see how individuals are both *outside in* the operations of the athletic machine. *Outside in* is described as how individuals can exist *in* a structure, such as collegiate athletics, yet, can also be *outside* the same structure, by actively critiquing its policies and procedures.

The second analytical tale concentrates on Butler's (1993) concept of mattering, which is described as how some bodies do not matter in the same ways as others. By applying Butler's concept to the field of collegiate athletics through the textual resources from the recent UNC scandal, I was able to see how race plays a significant role into the

ways bodies come to matter. Also of magnitude is both the prevalence and acceptance of racism in collegiate athletics. The disproportionate number of Black male athletes in the profit sports in contrast to the predominantly White leadership and student bodies at colleges and universities draws attention to how essential views of race are deeply entrenched in higher education.

### **Significance of this Study**

Using Butler and Spivak as characters on the same plane as the other players in the event “will always be something of a mess, a mystery, and a miracle” (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 175). My goal in this project is to enter into this messy, mysterious miracle neither to *solve* the problem or phenomenon of athletics in higher education nor to provide a miracle or a cure for the marginalization of academics in favor of the valorization of athletics. I aim to create a new way of seeing and viewing the presence of sports programs on university and college campuses. I visualize a re-thinking of the current practices and policies that govern and prize collegiate athletics. I hope that the viewing of collegiate athletics can re-focus to zoom in to the level of individuals to see through *others*’ eyes rather than through the monocles of money.

I am troubled by how the insertion of athletics into college campuses is shaping the future of higher education in America. As a college faculty member and administrator, a parent, and an advocate for higher education, I am concerned about how the high stakes environment of college sports changes the university education of students, athletes and non-athletes, as well as alters the lives of other individuals (employees, administrators) caught in the snares of “the athletic trap” (Nixon, 2014, p. 32). The presence of athletics in academic

institutions changes the way higher education institutions operate with a slant toward the assurance of athletic success over academic achievement.

Another purpose of this study is one of cultural critique. My analysis is a critique of the culture and state of collegiate athletics at its core in hopes of being able to offer alternative ways of being for athletics in higher education. While I do view the state of collegiate athletics as problematic, I do not see college sports as a problem easily solved. From an epistemological standpoint, I take on this project to shift my own and others' thinking toward a questioning of our current beliefs and ideas about the presence of athletics in higher education. In the words of Marcus and Fischer (1999), I embrace "a sophisticated epistemology that takes full account of intractable contradiction, paradox, irony, and uncertainty in the explanation of human activities" (p. 15). By problematizing the existence of collegiate athletics, I reveal hidden interests of domination and power within the field of collegiate athletics (Marcus & Fischer, 1999). In line with ethnographic aims, I expose the high stakes environment of college sports programs to show possible alternatives to the way academics and athletics inhabit higher education. The illumination of how academics and athletics operate within higher education may reveal compelling areas demanding policy changes to improve the education of all students, athletes and non-athletes alike. Policy changes may also lead to a more equitable environment for students, faculty, staff, and administrators at colleges and universities that house big-time sports programs.

In the next parts of this dissertation, I offer a critical view of collegiate athletics in the United States through a review of the associated literature, provide a rationale for using poststructuralism as a theoretical framework, and discuss the appropriateness of a post-qualitative methodological approach. Next, I provide an overview of the UNC scandal

depicted as a realistic tale followed by two conceptual tales using Spivak's (1993) concept of marginality and Butler's (1993) concept of mattering. I conclude this dissertation with summative thoughts aimed to provoke new ways of seeing academics and athletics in higher education including operational and policy changes at the organizational and institutional levels.

## **Chapter 2: A Critical Tale: The Paradoxes of Academic and Athletics in Higher Education**

I start by fashioning a tale of collegiate athletics critiquing the paradoxical existence of academics and athletics in higher education. In so doing, I present a review of the literature on collegiate athletics by describing its importance as a cultural phenomenon and its influence on academic culture in higher education. In this review, I highlight how college sports programs have strengthened into a formidable force within higher education institutions. I also draw attention to how the exponential growth of big-time sports programs has been marked by numerous scandals and frauds shaping the current face collegiate athletics. My purpose in this tale is to interrogate how the structure of collegiate athletics creates an atmosphere infused with scandal and fraud.

As part of this critique, I relay a brief history of collegiate athletics in the United States followed by an overview of current debates surrounding sports programs in higher education. Current debates include amateurism, sports careerism, the struggle for both academic and athletic elitism, the impact of Title IX on both higher education and athletics, admission of academically underprepared athletes, and the financial aspects of collegiate athletics. I direct close attention to recent academic scandals and frauds stemming from the admission of underprepared students and the central drive to maintain student athlete eligibility. I also discuss the social justice implications of the parallel existence of academics and athletics in higher education including the exploitation and marginalization of student athletes and the compromise of academic integrity in higher education for athletic success.

## **The Evolution of Collegiate Athletics**

This brief overview is an endeavor of depth over breadth where I look deeply at certain events or episodes in the history of collegiate athletics to see how the structure of college sports creates an atmosphere of domination. I do not intend to provide a comprehensive, all-inclusive history of collegiate athletics from origin to present. Many inclusive histories of collegiate athletics have been constructed; therefore, my desire is not to repeat that which has already been written, but to uncover that which is new and fresh. By emphasizing pivotal episodes that have contributed to the growth of athletic programs and their prominent position in higher education, I provide an overview of how sports made their way into the academy and how this relationship has evolved into its present form.

The seed of college sports took root in the academy in the mid-nineteenth century (1852) at Lake Winnepesaukee through an intercollegiate rowing competition between Harvard and Yale (Nixon, 2014; Yost, 2010). Throughout the nineteenth century and into the beginning of the twentieth century, American collegiate sports was primarily limited to the elite colleges and universities such as Harvard and Yale (Nixon, 2014). Elitist sports such as rowing and yachting dominated early university sports programs during this time period (Clotfelter, 2011). Presently, Ivy League schools no longer stand atop the football rankings as they have taken a back seat to the successful football powerhouses consumed with commerciality such as television revenues and ticket sales. Yost (2010) connects this reversal of ascendancy to the privileging of the athletic over the academic by saying “the Ivy League actually expects its athletes to be students first and athletes second” (p. 64).

The late nineteenth century marked the creation of American football (Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011; Nixon, 2014; Yost, 2010). The beginning of football stands as one of the

most significant events in all of collegiate and professional sports due to football's prominent position in sports. Football out-generates all other sports programs in terms of income, popularity, and visibility. Football was founded on a violent agenda where players use militaristically designed maneuvers on the field fueling masculinity in the ruthless and relentless pursuit of victory. Grave injury and death were commonplace in football competitions during the rise of the twentieth century in a brutal display of voyeurism (Clotfelter, 2011; Nixon, 2014). Newspaper comics parodied these violent conditions through images of the Grim Reaper standing watch by the goal post reigning over the annihilated victims of the season, lying motionless and lifeless (Branch, 2011). As another example of football's violent beginnings, not until 1939 were helmets part of the mandatory player equipment (Branch, 2011).

In 1905 during football's infancy, Harvard hired its first football coach at a salary double that of any current or tenured professor (Branch, 2011). This substantial discrepancy between academic and athletic salaries shows the early privileging of athletics over academics.

In an effort to *boost* college enrollment, college presidents and trustees viewed the widespread allure of athletic competition as a spectator sport as a “way to popularize the Ivory Tower and make it more appealing to the American public” (Nixon, 2014, p. 7). Although athletics was regarded as an approach to boost the number of students at colleges and universities, it is ironic that the term athletic *boosters* was later created to describe a group of individuals who help *boost* or supplement athletic program budgets. By viewing collegiate athletics in its present form, it is difficult to see this as its original intent. In its

current iteration, colleges seem as if they were first institutions of athletic competition while secondarily incorporating academic programs and endeavors.

College presidents and administrators often also falsely state that athletic programs are “an extension of the academic mission” (Nixon, 2014, p. 6); yet, collegiate athletics (Benedict & Keteyian, 2013; Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011; Feldman, 2007; Harrison, 2000; Lewis, 2010; Nixon, 2014; Rhoden, 2006; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010) is problematic because it pulls attention, focus, and resources away from the central mission of colleges and universities, which is education. Oddly, athletics is rarely, if ever, mentioned in any official college mission statements (Clotfelter, 2011). An examination of the wording of many of the mission statements reveals that the university lists the official university mission statements as their instructional or educational missions. One would think athletic programs are separate and distinct entities from the colleges and universities whose name they bear. It is important to note that the image projected by an institution is primarily fashioned for the general public and spectators (an external audience) (Ahmed, 2012). The mission of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) is listed as follows:

Our mission is to serve as a center for research, scholarship, and creativity and to teach a diverse community of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to become the next generation of leaders.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly absent from this mission statement is any reference to the extensive big-time athletic programs of the university, yet the UNC Department of Athletics purposefully includes education as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> (<http://www.catalog.unc.edu/about/#Mission>)



The mission of the Department is to sponsor a broad-based athletic program that provides educational and athletic opportunities for young men and women to grow and develop, and to serve the interests of the university by complementing and enhancing its diversity and quality of life.<sup>2</sup>

While the mission statement above mentions education and athletics, education is deliberately listed prior to athletics to further promote the notion of the education as a priority for athletes and to reinforce the concept of the student athlete.

Separate website addresses and locations are dedicated to the athletic programs of the university, which often rank higher in the search engines than those of the official university academic pages. A mere mention of health and wellness is as close as many colleges and universities come to exposing the fact that they are part of what Nixon (2014) and Sperber (2000) refer to as Big Time Universities (BTUs). Big Time Universities are known as those with athletic programs generating millions of dollars in revenue. It is difficult to reconcile the idea of a separate academic mission and a separate athletic mission while no unified overall university mission is present.

To further demonstrate how colleges and universities lead double lives, I turn to the online presence for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). The website for the university is listed as <http://www.unc.edu>, whereas, the website address for UNC athletics is: <http://www.goheels.com>. In the case of domain names and website extensions, the frequent use of the terms .com and .edu becomes normalized to the point that it is easy to forget what the abbreviations (.com and .edu) actually stand for, commercial and education. At first glance, the delineation of the website domains may seem like a good way to separate

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<sup>2</sup>([http://www.goheels.com/ViewArticle.dbml?DB\\_LANG=C&SITE=UNC&DB\\_OEM\\_ID=3350&ATCLID=205488770&SPID=108097&SPSID=668181](http://www.goheels.com/ViewArticle.dbml?DB_LANG=C&SITE=UNC&DB_OEM_ID=3350&ATCLID=205488770&SPID=108097&SPSID=668181))

academics and athletics. On further investigation, clues become visible to the true nature of both entities. The unc.edu website address represents the university and the goheels.com address represents their commercial sports enterprise with the .com domain. The attachment of a commercial website extension to university sports is a clear indication of the commerciality of collegiate athletics. The division of web pages into separate domains demonstrates society's tendency toward categorization and labeling. Separating education and athletics online is another way to keep the two from merging and becoming part of one another, i.e. this is a way to keep athletics out of education and education out of athletics. Likewise, athletes are not allowed to cross over the boundaries of the field into the classroom, while the students stay out of bounds in athletic competitions as spectators. Language of classification like the website extensions is a means for setting boundaries and keeping individuals within those boundaries.

As the seed of athletics grew within higher education, since their origin in the mid-nineteenth century, new athletics programs sprouted up in institutions across the country. Capitalist breezes blew through university halls offering the prospect of economic yields to supplement the financial needs of academic program offerings. Unfortunately, institutions were unaware that collegiate athletics were developing resilient roots embedded in the operations of the university.

### **The Rise of the NCAA**

The intensification of severe injury to athletes, rising commerciality, and academic compromise led to a building desire to reform college sports. This field of controversy gave rise to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), renamed from the previous Intercollegiate Athletic Association (IAA) (Branch, 2011; Nixon, 2014). The fledgling

beginnings of the NCAA were far removed from the authoritative organization of today. In 1951, Walter Byers, a college dropout with no experience in leading an organization of this scope, was appointed as the director of the NCAA. The NCAA first got a taste of its potential power through the enforcement of a season-long (1952-1953) suspension of the University of Kentucky basketball team due to a “point-shaving conspiracy” (Branch, 2011, p. 25). Byers maintained his “Oz-like façade” (Branch, 2011, p. 33) as the NCAA had no real authority to invoke the penalty. Byers simply convinced administrators at the University of Kentucky to comply with a common goal of reforming all college sports. The NCAA also leveraged its newfound authority through the negotiation of exclusive television contracts where the proceeds were distributed to colleges and universities via the NCAA. The NCAA threatened schools who dared negotiate their own contracts by stating other competing schools would refuse to play them outside a NCAA negotiated contract. This atmosphere of control and intimidation has led to Branch’s (2011) branding of the NCAA as “a profitable cartel” (p. 30). Throughout the rise of the NCAA to its current sovereignty, Byers proved himself to be “a bureaucratic master of pervasive anonymous intimidation” (Branch, 2011, p. 25). A break with the “cartel” (Branch, 2011, p. 30) occurred when the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma liberating colleges and universities from the restrictive football trade agreements negotiated by the NCAA (Branch, 2011). The continued submission of colleges and universities to the oppressive regime of the NCAA is primarily tied to the massive sums of money generated from the publicity of college sports (Nixon, 2014).

## **The Influence of Title IX**

Title IX, part of the Education Amendments of 1972, requires gender equity for all educational programs which receive federal funding. One of the most significant impacts of this federal law has been on the ratio of athletes by sex in collegiate sports. Title IX forbids the discrimination against any individual, based on sex, in any program under receipt of federal financial assistance. The intention of the enactment of Title IX was to increase opportunities for women in higher education, both academic and athletic (Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011).

In recent years, female students have outnumbered males in higher education enrollment. According to the 2001 report by the United States Government Accounting Office (USGAO), there have been greater gains in athletic opportunities for women at the team level (more teams for women), but on the individual athlete level, men still participate at a higher level than do female athletes. Wrestling is the only sport that has a confirmed decrease in programs across the study population. All other male sports teams either showed little to no change or an increase in number of existing teams. In summary, the number of female athletic teams has increased as well as overall female participation. The rate of female participation was still lower than that of male athletes overall according to the study (USGAO, 2001).

A criticism of Title IX is that in preservation of a sex-based quota, the result has been an unnecessary reduction in male sports programs. Yost (2010) called Title IX sports programs—“mandatory women’s teams” (p. 328). Irving (2003) made a call to eliminate “proportionality” (p. 2) in favor of fairness. Proportionality requires that the ratio of males to females in athletics be proportionate to the ratio of males and females in the whole college

student population. His argument is based on the elimination of many men's wrestling programs and the creation of what he sees as "ludicrous" (Irving, 2003, p. 2) program inventions such as a women's rowing team in an Arizona institution. Yost (2010) also shared a similar opinion by stating Louisiana State University's mandatory staging of a women's and men's basketball team despite the large deficits incurred by the women's program. Remarkably, Irving (2003) refused the label of anti-feminist by shallowly stating his support of pro-choice movements. I would argue that mere support of pro-choice does not a feminist make. Irving (2003) did clarify his position by expressing his disagreement not with Title IX, but its enforcement of proportionality.

Many traditionally male-dominated or male-only sports such as wrestling and football face elimination based on the lack of teams for female competition. Faced with the prospect of cutting sports programs, many institutions make decisions based on the profitability of the programs. The privileging of profit over opportunity further demonstrates how big time college sports control institutional decisions and dictate university operations. The leading revenue generators (football and basketball) rarely face the same fate as other athletic programs. The favoring of athletes within the profit sports leads to concessions on the academic *front* to protect the fertile territory of the athletic harvest.

Title IX did not begin as an agenda to increase female participation in sports. It was originally intended to boost female presence in male-dominated career fields such as business and engineering instead of the traditional care fields of nursing and teaching. Prior to its demise in 1982, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) was the organization overseeing collegiate athletics for women (Branch, 2011; Yost, 2010). The AIAW's budget was boosted by the Title IX (1972) funds, yet vowed to never go down the

path toward providing scholarships for female athletes (Branch, 2011; Yost 2010). The organization viewed the quest for academic scholarships in exchange for athletic performance as a road toward corruption. This view was in stark contrast to that of the female athletes represented by the organization as they sought equal treatment to the male athletes who were reaping many benefits in exchange for their play on the field (Branch, 2011; Yost 2010).

When the AIAW ended, women's sports were integrated into the NCAA organization. Despite the insertion of females into the NCAA body, according to Branch (2011), "The NCAA remained a guys' culture" (p. 85). Although women's college sports have made great inroads toward the financial and commercial success of their male counterparts, their revenues are only a fraction of the income garnered by the male revenue sports through broadcast rights, ticket sales, and merchandise sales.

The preceding sections have relayed an overview of the history of collegiate athletics spanning its innocent beginnings as an extra-curricular activity for students to its transformation into a program characterized by both its prominence and dominance on college campuses nationwide. This chronicle of collegiate athletics leads to a discussion of contemporary challenges and concerns facing the future co-existence of academics and athletics in higher education.

### **Current Issues in Collegiate Athletics**

The popularity of college sports has led to an unprecedented growth in new sports programs, larger stadiums, modern facilities, more athletic scholarships, and increased donations by boosters (athletic supporters). This prevailing continuous improvement agenda present in college sports has been coined as the "financial arms race" (Branch, 2011, p. 15),

which references a keeping up with the Big Time Universities (BTUs) of college sports (Clotfelter, 2011). Each time another university renovates their facilities, adds more seats, more luxury boxes, or especially builds an entirely new facility, competing colleges feel compelled (forced) to escalate their own sports program and facilities, to raise the ante. Collegiate sports is plagued by insatiable greed as the financial arms race always demands better coaches, superior athletes, and bigger stadiums (facilities) (Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011; Nixon, 2014; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010). The path toward boundless growth in collegiate athletics has placed athletics in the dominant position over academics in higher education. Additional examples of how athletics have been elevated over academics include prestige, allocation of funds, and alumni contributions. The infamous Spellings Commission Report noted numerous areas of concern in higher education such as “access, cost and affordability, educational quality, transparency and accountability, and innovation” (Nixon, 2014, p. 122). Many who are critical of the current state of higher education also add athletic spending to the inventory of higher education struggles. As Nixon (2014) wrote, “Public universities competing in NCAA Division I sports spend as much as six times more per athlete than they spend to educate students” (p. 1, quoting USA Today article).

### **Models of Collegiate Athletics**

Nixon (2014) identified two models of college sports, the collegiate model and the commercial model. The collegiate model emphasizes the academic role of the student athlete while the commercial model accentuates the athletic component. In the sense of the commercial model of collegiate athletics, the purpose of the programs is to maximize revenue and generate championships. This “runaway commercialism” (Branch, 2011, p. 7) satisfies the need to oil the wheels of the money-making athletic machine. The commercial

model highlights the accomplishments of athletes on the field while the collegiate model centers on the academic achievements of students in the classroom. As stated by Yost (2010), collegiate athletics is a “commercial endeavor first and an athletic competition second” (p. 63). In summary,

The commercial model has created a big-time college sports world populated by highly paid coaches, star athletes playing in front of huge crowds and national television audiences, intense pursuit of high school prospects, sports media personalities, corporate sponsors and partnerships, branded merchandise, expensive tickets for premium seats and prime-time games, federal tax write-offs for donors, conferences constantly seeking better deals with television and sponsors, schools jockeying to be in the most lucrative conferences, and debates about whether college athletes at the most commercialized level should be paid to play as professional athletes. (Nixon, 2014, p. 6)

In the words of Jensen (2013), “financialization has led not only to intensified inequality but also to greater economic instability” (p. 29). The Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) “spent more than \$91,000 per athlete compared with just over \$13,000 per student” (Benedict & Keteyian, 2013, p. 17). Recent years in higher education have been marked by significant financial challenges as each year brings continued decreases in public and private funding for academic programs, faculty, and staff. Shrinking public and private funds for academics have led to tuition and fee increases. One of the chief fees charged in addition to tuition are athletic fees. The distribution of the financial obligations of athletics to all students is one way students *pay the price* for big-money college sports. Despite the declining economic conditions in the academy, athletic spending has continued to not only rise, but increase



exponentially. The substantial material aspects of collegiate athletics set it forth or poise it as the embodiment of an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) (Althusser, 1972). An ISA is a means by which an institution of the State controls the populace through ideology. The sustaining and unrelenting expenditures by collegiate athletics in contrast to the reduction of funding for academics shows the self-preserving nature of the ISA as a way “that capitalist society maintains itself” (Belsey, 2002, p. 33).

Tremendous cash outlays paired with an intense desire to win equals a high stakes field susceptible to corruption, scandal, and fraud. The commercialization of college sports has compromised both academic and moral standards at institutions of higher education as discussed next.

### **Academic Frauds and Scandals**

Scandal and controversy are not a new or recent phenomenon in the arena of collegiate athletics. The earliest recognized collegiate athletic competition involved professional athletes posing as college students, bribes of alcohol and cash for participants, and fanatical behavior. Recent scandals in collegiate athletics include those emerging from schemes to admit academically underprepared athletes and keep them eligible for play, under-the-table payments to athletes and coaches by boosters, and pervasive sexual assault and abuse by athletes and, in the case of Penn State, coaches. A current example of scandal within a university athletic program and the focus of this study is the case at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), which I summarized earlier in the introduction to this dissertation. I presented the summary of a *real* scandal at UNC<sup>3</sup> to provide a brief overview of the specific subject matter of this study and to show the current and continued proliferation of the privileging of athletics over academics in higher education institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> A more detailed account of the UNC scandal is located in Chapter 5: A Realist Tale.

The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, started in 1991, was ambitiously driven to reform college sports by reestablishing the proper balance between academics and athletics in higher education. The titles of recent reports by the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, *A Call to Action: Reconnecting College Sports and Higher Education* (2001) and *Restoring the Balance: Dollars, Values, and the Future of College Sports* (2010), demonstrate that the state of collegiate athletics is not in a state of equilibrium, but disproportion. In the sections which follow, I elaborate on how the high stakes environment of collegiate athletics manufactures a productive environment of intense pressure for individuals.

### **Structural Aspects of Collegiate Athletics**

A reading of Althusser's (1972) Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) reveals how the structure of collegiate athletics works to produce restrictive conditions for individuals involved in college sports. I utilize Althusser's (1972) concept of an ISA as a structural analysis of collegiate sports in order to make an argument for opening up these normalizing structures produced by collegiate athletics from a poststructural perspective.

I define an ISA as a hegemonic power mechanism by which the State controls the polis through the use of ideology (Althusser, 1972). Ideology, in this sense, is the prospect and appeal of fame and fortune (a professional sports career) through the pathway of an athletic scholarship. College athletic programs in football and basketball are often called the minor leagues of the National Football League (NFL) and the National Basketball Association (NBA). "An ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice or practices. This existence is material," wrote Althusser (1972, p. 166). This apparatus manifests itself in the form of the material, the institutional. The material existence is present in the monetary or

capitalist aspects surrounding collegiate athletics and the associated professional sports organizations.

According to Althusser (1972), the “*educational state apparatus* [original emphasis] ... is installed in the dominant position” (p. 152). Due to the prominent position of education, I propose that education in the form of colleges and universities represents the supreme Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Althusser (1972) includes both educational (schools) and cultural (sports) institutions in his enumeration of ISAs. I recognize the combination of school and sport as the formation of the epitome of an ideological state apparatus. College (higher education) and sport join together to form a “double-functioning” (Althusser, 1972, p. 145) state apparatus, both ideological and repressive. As observed by Althusser (1972) “very subtle explicit and tacit combinations may be woven from the interplay of the (Repressive) State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses” (p. 145-146). He differentiated a Repressive State Apparatus from an Ideological State Apparatus by their functions. A Repressive State Apparatus functions primarily through the use of violence whereas an Ideological State Apparatus exists on the basis of ideology. He also acknowledged the “double functioning” (Althusser, 1972, p. 145-146) nature that no State apparatus can be solely repressive or ideological as any State apparatus functions by both repression and ideology either chiefly or to a lesser extent.

Ideological state apparatuses serve to preserve the status quo by convincing everyone of their *obvious* aim to serve the best interests or the welfare of all. As chronicled by Branch (2011), “College athletics are rooted in the classical ideal of *Mens sana in corpore sano*—a sound mind in a sound body—and who would argue with that?” (p. 10). By setting up the structure of athletics within higher education institutions, it adds to the acceptance of

contradictory missions and goals. As Clotfelter (2011) stated, athletics and higher education are “strange bedfellows” (p. 32). The normalization of multi-million dollar sports programs within the context of higher education creates an impression that the two never existed otherwise. This vision of originary or *always already* co-existence of athletics and academics adds to the expectation of academics lingering behind the backdrop of collegiate athletics. Jensen (2013) noted, “Oppressive systems work hard to make it appear that the hierarchy and the disparity in power and resources that flow from hierarchy is natural, and, therefore, beyond modification” (p. 45). A refusal to foster the mind over the body results in or creates marginality in its truest sense, an athletic labor contract. Athletes provide sacrificial labor for the university’s athletic machine. The mind/body dichotomy results in viewing many of the athletes as bodies/machines (wheels/gears turning in the machine) over minds/human beings. This represents a privileging of the valorization of physical ability over the intellectual development and capacity of the mind, the physical (rational) over mental (emotional). The hierarchical relationship of athletics over academics represents an embedded structural violence. I define structural violence by how college operations are constructed with distinct hierarchies driven by cash inflows and capital outlays. Through the use of poststructural theory, I can question this structural violence by thinking about the following: What is the athletic machine churning out? Educationally deprived individuals? A value of the body over the mind?

Through this reading of the literature through an application of Althusser’s (1972) theory to the field of college sports, both the ideological and repressive nature of the collegiate athletic apparatus have become visible. To further frame how ISAs such as higher education and collegiate athletics can create a regulative atmosphere for individuals, I

explore how normalization is present within the realm of collegiate athletics. I specifically address how the creation of the NCAA and the development of the myth of the student athlete coupled with student academic eligibility policies have generated a rigid environment of control within higher education.

### **Eurocentrism and Normalization in Collegiate Athletics**

Although when Althusser (1972) spoke of the “ruling class” (p. 146) he is referencing the French bourgeoisie, a “ruling class” is still present in America. The hegemonic notions of Eurocentrism are prevalent in the United States as decisions are made for a heterogeneous whole by a predominantly male, Caucasian/White, upper-class, highly mobilized, wealthy, educated elite body of few. Althusser (1972) stated that “Beneath the ruling ideology....is the ideology of the ruling class” (p. 146). Jensen (2013) also wrote:

Naturalness is essential. Not surprisingly, people in the dominant class exercising the power gravitate easily to such a view. And because of their power to control key intellectual institutions (especially education and mass communication), those in the dominant class can fashion a story about the world that leads some portion of the people in the subordinated class to internalize the ideology. A social order that violates almost everyone’s basic principles is transformed into a natural order that cannot be changed. (p. 46)

The supposed *naturalness* of collegiate athletics is prevalent through media portrayals which both glamorize and normalize current academic and athletic practices at higher education institutions. This includes a normalization of a glamorized vision of the African American college athlete and a perpetuated de-naturalization of the African American college student.

Many student athletes, especially those of color, are *marked* as *Other* within the walls of the university, but as *some-body* while *outside* the university walls. This practice of *other-ing* is widespread in higher education and sports. Sonny Vacaro, known as the “reformed sneaker pimp” due to his former positions with athletic apparel companies, remarked that college sports “goes beyond race, to human rights. The least educated are the most exploited” (Branch, 2011, p. 9). Jensen (2013) also related current societal practices as “predatory corporate capitalism that is inconsistent with basic human values” (p. 28). To extend the discussion of the destructive practices of the athletic machine, I now direct my focus toward the athletic machine’s inclination toward violence.

### **The Violence of the Athletic Machine**

Althusser (1972) defined a Repressive State Apparatus such as the military, the police, and the courts as that which “functions by violence” (p. 143). As all apparatuses rarely function solely by repression or ideology, the combination of college and sports work together by methods of repression and ideology. The violent tendencies of the athletic machine often end lethally. The introduction of American football in the late 1800s through the turn of the century was stained with a deadly record. According to the Boston Globe, “from 1880 to 1905 there were 330 deaths and 1,149 serious injuries that were a direct result of college football” (Yost, 2010, p. 73). Despite numerous pleas to end football in its early beginnings, football not only continued, it flourished by growing in both popularity and numbers of programs. Football’s future was secure as investigative panels were appointed by those with the most to gain or lose from the possible discontinuation of football (Yost, 2010).

Walter Byers, the longtime executive director (1951-1988) of the NCAA, revealed the true intent behind the construction of the term student athlete by stating it was

deliberately crafted to aid in legal battles with injured athletes, particularly football, filing for workers' compensation benefits (Branch, 2011; Zimbalist, 1999). The ingenuity of the term reaped its first of many victories to follow in the 1950s case of Ray Dennison's widow, who filed for workers' compensation death benefits, stating his death was a result of a "work-related" (Branch, 2011, p. 37-38) incident. Ultimately, the Supreme Court of Colorado confirmed the NCAA's position against Dennison ruling that the college was "not in the football business" (Branch, 2011, p. 37). Another such case involved Kent Waldrep, a former Texas Christian University football player, who was paralyzed while playing in a game against Alabama in 1974 (Branch, 2011). Waldrep also filed for workers' compensation benefits for the injuries he sustained while playing football. Once again, the NCAA stood victorious in the use of its student athlete defense, although Waldrep spent more than 25 years fighting for benefits. The NCAA does not have student members, leaving student athletes voiceless and powerless in legal disputes and basic human rights. The term student athlete through its inherent paradoxical ambiguity exhibits its priceless value as it is "both a legalistic defense and a noble ideal" (Branch, 2011, p. 42).

Furthermore, debates over the proliferation of concussions and brain injury (degenerative brain disease) in football continue. Of utmost concern is the abundance of these injuries at the collegiate level, as they do not have the union protection afforded to professional athletes (Benedict & Keteyian, 2013). Recently, the movie *Concussion* (2015) highlighted Dr. Bennet Omalu's battle with the National Football League (NFL) over the recognition of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), damage to the brain sustained from repeated sports-related blows to the head leading to degenerative brain disease. Stages of

CTE start as mild as dizziness and headaches and later progress to dementia, loss of muscular function and cognitive abilities, and suicidal tendencies.

Injury occurs to the body as well as psychologically through the privileging of the body over the mind, developing the body to its fullest potential while leaving the mind undernourished or underdeveloped. The punishment to the body leaves the mind untouched by education but marked (inscribed) by the physical privileging mindset and thinking (being told) there is an inability of the mind to develop its intellectual capacities.

I also contest that the student eligibility policies exhibit the structural oppression of violence of the mind. Violence, in this sense, extends beyond physical violence of the body to include mental and emotional violence by subjecting the brain and mind to the harsh violences of low expectations for the development of intellectual capacities while privileging the development and enhancement of the corporeal physique or the body. Typically violence is associated with physicality; whereas, I contend the violence present in collegiate sports can be even more damaging as it exerts more pain and anguish than merely that of the physical nature.

## **Critique of Current Literature**

### **Strengths of the Literature**

Although Nixon (2014) centralized his analysis of collegiate athletics on what he calls the “athletic trap” (p. 32) from the perspective of university presidents and trustees, the issues he brings to bear are relevant and applicable to all of collegiate athletics. The issues of commercialization, corruption, and reform of collegiate athletics facing presidents and trustees are also the most pressing matters challenging college sports in general (Benedict & Keteyian, 2013; Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011; Feldman, 2007; Harrison, 2000; Lewis,



2010; Nixon, 2014; Rhoden, 2006; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010) . The manner in which presidents and trustees have the positional power to change the current and future shape of college sports in America is possibly more significant than those on the perimeters of college sports. College presidents and trustees are simply part of the network of power relations which is college sports. Further noted by Nixon (2014), they have “the authority to control and change the direction of big-time college sports on their campuses [and] whether willingly or reluctantly [they] give athletics preferential or special treatment” (p. 2). While Nixon (2014) focused on the complicity of college presidents and trustees in what he calls “an athletic trap of their own making” (p. 2), I take the issues illuminated to see how the current structure of collegiate athletics produces normalizing conditions for all individuals within the “athletic trap” (Nixon, 2014, p. 2). The primary issue explored in my study is how the business of college sports has corrupted higher education through a compromise of academic and moral values (Nixon, 2014).

### **Weaknesses in the Literature**

Clotfelter (2011) noted that “serious academic research rarely deals with the subject [the extensive presence of college sports on college campuses] at all” (p. 15-16). Academic literature much like the terms college sports and student athlete tends to treat the two as separate and distinct entities. This isolating perspective gives the impression that only one side of the equation exists at one time, either college or sport. For example, while the college is invoking the image of a higher education institution, the enterprise of sports fails to emerge. The same is true as sports materializes on the college campus and the educational institution ceases to exist.

## Dissertation Goals

As a goal of this project, I am interested in how the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) of collegiate athletics produces student athletes as subjects and how higher education is complicit in the reproduction of the status quo. In *The System* by Benedict and Keteyian (2013), some of the *other* groups (coaches, hostesses, athletic directors, athletic boosters, aspiring universities, students, athletic staff, tutors, investigators, walk-on athletes, recruits, sports networks, and professional draft picks) are featured as part of the analysis of the operations of collegiate athletics. Benedict and Keteyian's (2013) expansion beyond a lone focus on student athletes demonstrates the athletic machine's wide-ranging influence on individuals and groups. Of primary interest, I explore how student athletes, as well as some of these other groups of individuals, are subjected to the operations of the athletic machine. I am interested in how the athletic machine produces different shifting subjectivities and creates conditions that lead to and require performative actions by individuals and groups caught in its snares.

My dissertation inquiry marks the time to start "shaking off the silence that has characterized so much of the scholarly research about universities" (Clotfelter, 2011, p. 58). In so doing, I bring attention to how the presence of big-time sports programs threatens the future of American higher education. Many colleges and universities operate more like a profitable entertainment enterprise than that of an educational institution. My goal is to upset the merciless maneuvers of the athletic machine by unmasking the hidden interests of hegemonic control in the court of collegiate athletics. Poststructural ideas create the ability to think differently about the social world around us and it is through this transformed thinking that I have shaped my analytical questions to be examined as part of this project:

- How can the viewing of big-time sports programs as the athletic machine disrupt the acceptance of athletics in higher education?
- How can the concept of marginality be used to see how individuals are *outside in* the athletic machine?
- In the field of collegiate athletics, and more specifically the UNC scandal, how do bodies emerge as those that matter—and why?
- How can the concept of mattering disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics?

To show how poststructural thought can be productive toward a transformed thinking about the field of collegiate athletics, I next explain its usefulness as a theoretical framework.

### Chapter 3: A Poststructural Tale

*“Poststructural critiques ... can be employed to examine any commonplace situation, any ordinary event or process, in order to think differently about the occurrence, to open up what seems ‘natural’ to other possibilities.”*

*(St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479)*

In this dissertation study, poststructuralism provides a theoretical framework for educational inquiry through critiquing one such “commonplace situation” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479): the presence of big-time sports programs on college campuses. Poststructural theory aids in “opening up” the normalized existence of athletics in higher education by “thinking about it differently” as the paradoxes of collegiate athletics and academics. In this chapter, I first present a brief history of poststructuralism along with an introduction to the primary theorists who have contributed to the theory. The crux of my exploration is the primary poststructural concepts of language, power, and subjectivity. My critique of poststructural theory along with its applications for educational inquiry, more specifically this dissertation study, follows. Throughout this discussion of the usefulness of poststructuralism as this study’s theoretical framework, I offer specific examples of how this theory can problematize the use of the category *student athlete*. Although the examples presented primarily relate to student athletes, I acknowledge that other individuals and groups are also regulated by the athletic machine. I explore the athletic machine’s far-reaching tendencies toward normalization and intelligibility (Butler, 1990/2006) as part of my inquiry. I start this theoretical framework justification with an introduction to the origins of poststructuralism.

## **The Origins of Poststructuralism**

### **Brief History of Poststructuralism**

Poststructuralism started in France in the 1960s as a movement critiquing structuralism. Derrida (1967/1997, 1967/2007, 1973) was considered the most prominent critic of structuralism and de Saussure's concept of the sign. Derrida questioned the fixity of meaning suggested by the *final signified*. Derrida believed meaning was constantly deferred through a process he termed *différance*. *Différance* does not situate a stable meaning of language through time, but sees language as fluctuating and transforming over time through social and cultural practices. This critique first appeared through works such as Roland Barthes' (1967/2002) *Death of the Author*, which focused on a decentering of the author as the site of meaning in literary texts. In contrast, poststructural thought views meaning as varied based on the reader approaching the text in a specific historical context. In this case, every reading is a re-reading. Each reader brings something new to the text and in turn, something new comes back from the text.

The newness that comes from each reading is illustrated in my dissertation project. Each time I read the textual resources about the recent UNC scandal, I brought my knowledge of theory to the reading. In other words, I read the textual resources of the UNC scandal through the lens of theory, more specifically Spivak's concept of marginality and Butler's concept of mattering. When I returned to the theory, I also read the theory with the details of the UNC scandal in mind, which also created a new reading of the theory. Following poststructural views that meanings in language are constantly shifting, another reader could approach these same texts and return with a different reading, a new interpretation and analysis of the texts.

To further describe the evolution of poststructuralism, I now briefly discuss the significance of the concept of the sign to the beginnings of poststructural theory. In so doing, I also show how a poststructural critique of *the sign* relates to my dissertation study.

### **The Concept of the Sign**

Poststructural theory stems from Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of language as a fixed structure, termed "structural linguistics" (Weedon, 1997, p. 12). A fundamental understanding of de Saussure's concept of the sign is central to what is broadly known as structuralism. According to de Saussure, language does not reflect a fixed reality, but social reality is created by language. De Saussure's vision places language as the driving force behind social reality.

Poststructuralism represents a critique of the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of the sign which separates the sign into the signifier and the signified. This delineated sign consists of the signifier (the word(s), sound(s), image(s)) which conveys the signified (meaning). In this *structure* of the signifier and signified, there is no inherent connection or relationship between the two. In other words, their linkage is entirely arbitrary. Many words (signifiers) could convey a meaning of woman. There is no single word or signifier that can fix the meaning of woman. For example, there is nothing intrinsic to the signifier *whore* that denotes meaning; rather, it is its difference from other signifiers of womanhood such as *virgin* or *mother* that imparts meaning (see Weedon, 1997, p. 23). As Belsey (2002) stated "meaning is differential, not referential" (p. 10). The impossibility of the fixity of meaning for woman as well as other terms supports poststructural views of language. There is nothing inherent in the letters that make the word woman which *make* it mean woman versus tree. The signified (meaning) is constructed through social practices.

There can be multiple signifiers (words, sounds, and images) which invoke the same or similar meaning (signified), just the same as a singular signified can invoke multiple signifiers.

In relation to this particular project on collegiate athletics, there is nothing in the signifier of *student athlete* that determines what it means to be an athlete situated within a higher education institution. Although a single signifier, student athlete, may attempt to generalize the experiences of all student athletes; student athletes do not have identical experiences. Not only are there many types of college sports from golf to football, there are also both male and female athletes, further illustrating the impossibility of a single signifier to denote a singular fixed meaning.

The poststructural concept of the sign refuses the fixity of language and highlights its multiplicity and play. This site of uncertainty represents poststructuralism's divergence from structuralism. Poststructuralism interrogates de Saussure's idea of a fixed or *final signified* due to its dichotomous design, the alignment of signifier/signified. The *final signified* is known as a final destination of absolute meaning and certainty, closed off to future possibilities or re-interpretations. Alternatively, poststructuralism exposes "the plurality of the signifier" (Belsey, 2002, p. 22) by *opening up* the signified to the inscription of new meanings and possibilities. Related to my dissertation study, collegiate athletics stands as a structure which attempts to relegate athletes to a fixed way of being. The use of poststructural theory exposes the paradox of the term *student athlete*. The term *student athlete* is used by colleges and universities in a discursive effort to try to reinforce the importance of education for athletes. However, the term contains an inherent paradox

because, as my analysis will show, colleges and universities with big-time sports programs privilege athletics over academics.

Unlike structuralism which uses history as a way to view society, and political and cultural practices to seek an absolute set meaning, poststructuralism presents an analysis of how the shifting of cultural attitudes and values over time contributes to the different meanings of language. To further demonstrate how poststructural thought can open new ways of being for student athletes within the field of college sports, I now discuss its primary theoretical ideas.

### **Primary Ideas of Poststructural Theory**

Butler (2004) stated that “poststructuralism is not a monolith” (p. 195) and in this vein poststructural thought cannot be confined to a single theorist or a single set of works. Poststructural theory is closely associated with the work of such theorists as Louis Althusser (1972), Jacques Derrida (1967/1997, 1967/2007, 1973), Michel Foucault (1975/1995, 1980), and Jacques Lacan (1977). For purposes of this discussion, I focus primarily on how the ideas of Butler (1990/2006, 1993, 2004) support poststructural theory and concepts. To further explore how poststructuralism critiques the limits of structuralism, I focus on the foundational poststructural concepts of language, subjectivity, and power.

#### **Language**

Poststructuralism is based on the questioning of how the fixed nature of language is promoted through mechanisms such as binary relationships in society. As noted by Butler (1990/2006):

Language has a dual possibility: It can be used to assert a true and inclusive universality of persons, or it can institute a hierarchy in which only some persons are



eligible to speak and others, by virtue of their exclusion from the universal point of view, cannot 'speak' without simultaneously deauthorizing that speech. (p. 164)

Language pre-exists the people who are speaking it and will continue to exist beyond the lives of those same people. Language carries a trace of historical context, acquires a current historical context, and is open to transformation in future settings. In the case of collegiate athletics, language such as the term student athlete is marked by the *trace* of its past origins and meanings; yet, the same term can be re-signified with different meanings in a contemporary context. Although there is a mark of both the past and the present embodied in the term of student athlete, the term is also open to future re-signification of meanings. As Butler (2004) wrote, "One speaks a language that is already speaking, even if one speaks it in a way that is not precisely how it has been spoken before" (p. 69). When we speak the term student athlete, we are speaking it along with those who have spoken it before with different meanings; yet, we continue to broaden the term's range of meanings with each reiteration.

**Binary relationships.** Liberal humanism views the world through a strictly binary lens where identity is either one way or the *other*, allowing for no *in-between-ness* within or in the dichotomy. Butler (2004) disputed established ways of seeing the world by stating we "should expose the limits of its claim to universality, and compel a radical rethinking of its parameters" (p. 180). Poststructuralism denies a universalist view of the world by not only breaking apart the binary relationship, but looking for that which may dwell within and outside the binary boundaries. Butler (2004) proposed "a move beyond binarity into multiplicity" (p. 179). A varied view of the world aligns with poststructural views of language, subjectivity, and power as not singular and fixed, but multifaceted.

Poststructuralism also reverses the privileging hierarchy of the typical binary by taking the subservient term and seeing what newness is generated or opened up through this *undoing* of binary systems. For example, we can begin to see how we can make the familiar (i.e., traditional binaries) strange by stating the reversed binaries: she/he, woman/man, Black/White, homosexual/heterosexual, disabled/able, and poor/rich. By flipping the binary on its head, we can problematize the naturalness of the binary order through “a loss of certainty about what things are (and must be)” (Butler, 2004, p. 180). Likewise, it is impossible to fix the meaning of the term student athlete as seen by the disruption of the attempted signification by a flipping of the term as athlete student.

Following universalist claims and essentialist views is a quest toward a single a priori truth, whereas poststructural theory prescribes the absence of a single, accessible truth (Weedon, 1999). There is no absolute truth to be discovered; yet, language can set forth authoritative claims to truths. The prospect of an oppositional *either/or* existence leads to limited subject positions especially for women and other marginalized individuals based on their *assignment* in categories such as man/woman, White/Black, heterosexual/homosexual, rich/poor, and abled/disabled. This *either/or-ness* or *closed off-ness* of existence prohibits a being or existence outside a binary acceptance.

The duality of the binary does not simply set forth two opposite, yet equivalent terms. The binary denotes a hierarchical arrangement where one term is dominant while the other is subservient. A binary structure is what Butler (2004) called “a *regulatory* [original emphasis] operation of power that naturalizes the hegemonic instance and forecloses the thinkability of its disruption” (p. 43). For example, the first term in the binaries, male/female, man/woman, Mr./Mrs. and he/she places the male term in the prominent position, always privileging the

masculine term over the feminine. Rarely in print or speech do we find the flipping of the binary to place the feminine or *other* terms in the primary position of the binary. A reversal of the binary is made to seem and feel unnatural, aiding in the support of the hypothetical truth of the binary's structure. The typical hierarchically arranged binary illustrates a posturing of naturalness of the dualistic design. The naturalness of the organization of the binary is reinforced through the repetition of its appearance in discursive practices. The pairing and connection of the binary terms through the addition of the *and* in Mr. and Mrs. assumes the accepted and expected heteronormative pattern and practice. A utilization of the pronoun *he* and the possessive pronoun *his* in place of the use of he/she or his/her results in not just a privileging of the masculine term, but an over-privileging. This over-privileging can be seen as a process of erasure whereby or where only the masculine remains while the feminine disappears without a trace. The practice of this type of feminine erasure throughout many readings of literature contributes to the acceptance of *he* and *his* as the way it is, the status quo.

***The privileging of gender in collegiate athletics.*** Similar to the normalization of the masculine terms in language, the dominance of male sports programs is also accepted as just the way it is or the status quo. The normalization of the masculine terms as the standard in language also helped me see the favoring of the masculine in the topic of my dissertation project, collegiate athletics. College sports programs are heavily slanted toward the bolstering of men's athletic programs. The intense privileging of the profit sports is evident by the close association of the profit sports with the alleged broad-based term, collegiate athletics. The simple articulation of the term, collegiate athletics, carries the automatic assumption of a reference to the revenue sports (men's football and basketball). This

connotation with collegiate athletics and men's revenue sports (football and basketball) further demonstrates the elevated status of male sports programs in the realm of collegiate athletics. For example, UNC has a total of 26 sports programs<sup>4</sup> including fencing, golf, lacrosse, rowing, swimming and diving, gymnastics, soccer, and volleyball and yet, collegiate athletics still conjures an image of men's college football and basketball.

Jackson (2004) asserted that while “repetition works to establish the coherence of an identity category, this same repetition makes the category vulnerable to change” (p. 685). In line with poststructural thought, although the repetition and privileging of masculine terms in language in society is prevalent, it is precisely its recurrence which creates redundancy. The mundane presence of the masculine forms a space and desire for difference, an opening for newness. Correspondingly, the term student athlete displays an artificial consolidation of two binaric terms student and athlete. By erasing the “/” (student/athlete) to show the fundamental opposition of the two terms, there is a false merging of the two terms to create a supposed equally balanced individual who is both a student and an athlete. The hierarchical nature of the binary is left intact with the student (academic) favored over the athlete (athletics). This fictional privileging of academics over athletics further contributes to the charade of individuals as students first and athletes second. This superficial term also illustrates the power of language to convey meaning.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990/2006) expanded the gender/sex continuum by interrogating how a society of “binary regulation” (Kirby, 2006, p. 24) determines what is intelligible, legitimate, and accepted. The “regularizing grids of narrow binary possibility” (Kirby, 2006, p. 21) are the manner in which society controls individuals' ways of being in

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.goheels.com>

the world. If one exists outside the binary, hegemonic discourse labels their failure to conform to normative societal expectations as *other*, unintelligible, illegitimate, and unaccepted. Butler (2004) described regulation as “the institutionalization of the process by which persons are made regular” (p. 40). In terms of “binary regulation” (Kirby, 2006, p. 124), those outside the binary are considered to be irregular, not regular. The process of regulation is a method of both normalization (adhering or assimilating to what is accepted) and rejection (eliminating that which does not conform). In the first analysis chapter (see “Chapter 7: A Tale of Mattering”), I extend this discussion of how some bodies fall within acceptable boundaries while *others* outside those boundaries do not matter in the same ways.

Spivak (1993) appropriately stated that “Language is not everything. It is only a vital clue to where the self loses its boundaries” (p. 180). Thus, I make the move toward how subjectivity is formed through not only language, but historical, social, and political contexts.

### **Subjectivity**

According to Weedon (1997), “[Language] is the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is *constructed* [original emphasis]” (p. 21). In stark contrast to Western philosophical ideas of political and social organizations, poststructuralism stands in opposition of the liberal humanist subject that is coherent and fixed. Butler (2004) defined the liberal humanist subject as:

The unitary subject is the one who knows already what it is who enters the conversation the same way as it exits, who fails to put its own epistemological certainties at risk in the encounter with the other, and so stays in place, and becomes an emblem for property and territory, *refusing self-transformation, ironically, in the name of the subject* [original emphasis]. (p. 228)

While humanism proposes an *assumed* fixed essence and way of being throughout time, Weedon (1997) contended that subjectivity is “precarious, contradictory, and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak” (p. 32). Subjectivity is the site where an individual’s sense of self is constructed. A questioning of how the subject is constituted is what could be referenced as a sense of self. This is not an essence or truth known as *my-self*, but a *self* that may become a different self over time, yet shift back to *another self*.

Weedon (1997) offered the terms “full subjectivity” (p. 139) or full subjecthood as a goal of feminism. This term opens up a new way to think about subjectivity. “Full subjectivity” (Weedon, 1997, p. 139) describes the “opening up of the subject” (St. Pierre, 2001, p. 151) to a complete range of available subject positions for women. This option for an expanded range of subject positions creates new ways of being and becoming for women over the limited number of subject positions presented by society. A complete range of subject positions represents an unrestricted way of being in the world where no way of being is off limits or considered un-natural. This represents an abolishment of common sense thinking which presupposes what is and is not acceptable for women. Weedon’s (1997) concept of “full subjectivity” (p. 139) could also be applied to the limited subject positions available for student athletes. Many student athletes seek access to both a college education and athletic participation. Unfortunately, many student athletes, especially those in the revenue sports, are limited to their performance on the court or field while being denied full access to the classroom.

Weedon (1997) stated that “Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices—economic, social, and political—the meanings of which are a constant site of

struggle over power” (Weedon, 1997, p. 21). This “struggle over power” leads to an exploration of how a Foucauldian (1980) analysis of power can be productive toward poststructural and feminist thought.

## **Power**

Although Foucault refused the label of poststructural, his ideas are foundational to poststructural theory. Foucault (1980) revealed how power relations are present within the workings of established structures so firmly embedded in society such as asylums, prisons, hospitals, and schools. In relation to this project, I declare collegiate athletics is one of these established embedded societal structures. Foucault’s work seeks to break down these societal structures throughout history and expose their mechanisms and techniques as a network of power relations. Foucault (1980) observed that:

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in a position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (p. 98)

To some it may seem odd to group schools along with institutions such as asylums, prisons, and hospitals, but a closer examination reveals the haunting resemblance of a familiar normalizing gaze keeping everyone in line and in their place. This stratification of society within these structures or institutions through class can be accomplished through the

deception of an opportunity apparatus such as colleges and universities. The power relations at work in society and higher education can betray the social body by convincing its members that universal opportunities exist through the opportunity apparatus of higher education, while decisively upholding the status quo. Sadly, the promises and opportunities of higher education will never be universally accessible and available.

A Foucauldian (1980) view of this educational opportunity apparatus would say that “it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasures, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (p. 119). In the case of the opportunity apparatus of higher education, it is promoted as the universal opportunity provider saying *yes* to everyone. Although higher education is still inaccessible and unavailable to many marginalized populations, discourse states otherwise. Politicians and policymakers act as “vehicles of power” (Foucault, 1980, p. 98) producing these discourses of educational opportunity and economical hope. These power relations also produce an accepted knowledge about the universal availability of education to those who seek it regardless of its accuracy. Through the number of colleges and universities as *boasting points* for politicians and policymakers, I also assert that the creation of numerous colleges and universities also generates or “induces pleasures” (p. 119) as Foucault (1980) noted. These groups *feel good* about the creation of the apparatuses of opportunity. In the case of the structure of higher education, politicians, policymakers, and administrators have a *firm grip* on the marginalized in society pushing them into their necessary places. The boasting of the opportunity apparatus of higher education is especially evident through the glamorization and high visibility of athletics on college campuses. The hyper visibility of college sports through saturated media accounts creates the illusion of educational access through athletic scholarships. What is not readily visible is that the access to education



offered to high profile athletes in the revenue sports may not be the same as the education offered to all students. This alternate education can also be referred to as an eligibility education—a deliberate placement in easy, undemanding courses to maintain player eligibility, not a *real* education. College officials continue to exercise their *firm grip* on student athletes by luring them not with an education, but with the prospect of a professional sports career via the exposure gained on a college sports team. This allure secures the college's desire to construct a winning sports team and a diverse student body; yet, actually the colleges only want the students' athletic bodies, not their part in the student body. The major poststructural concepts of language, subjectivity, and power all contribute to the prominent positioning of collegiate athletics in higher education and the related marginalization and exploitation of student athletes. However, it is also important to understand how others contest the utility of poststructural theory as poststructuralism was formed out of a critique of structuralism. Thus, I now turn to critiques of poststructuralism.

### **Critiques of Poststructuralism**

#### **Language**

As language is central to poststructural theory, this prominent position of language, sometimes called “an over-privileging of language” (Weedon, 1999, p. 125), stands as a significant point of contention. Coined as the “linguistic turn” (Weedon, 1999, p. 125) in postmodernism, critics argue that poststructuralism fails to emphasize the role of human experience. A Foucauldian account of discourse is much broader than language alone to include “disciplinary mechanisms which take a material form in both social and cultural institutions” (Weedon, 1999, p. 125). In other words, language does not stand as a narrow idea within poststructural thought; language manifests itself in the form of the material. The

material is in the form of institutional structures such as schools, hospitals, and prisons.

Foucault (1980) and Althusser (1972) both also referenced these institutional structures as state apparatuses, which are discussed more thoroughly in “Chapter 2: A Critical Tale: The Paradoxes of Academic and Athletics in Higher Education” of this dissertation.

## **Power**

Poststructural feminists may take issue with Foucauldian concepts of power as limiting; yet, these limitations only exist in a world where power is singularly repressive. Foucault (1980) expressed, “To say one can never be ‘outside’ power does not mean that one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what” (p. 141). Foucault (1980) rejected power as simply prohibitive and exposed its generative nature as follows:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasures, forms knowledge, produces discourse. (p. 119)

While a repressive view of power allows women to view patriarchal relations that limit the range of available subject positions, the productive slant of power can help women occupy new and different subject positions. In this sense, power can produce an agency that is both “compliant and resistant” (Weedon, 1999, p. 120). In connection with this project, the generative properties of power can also similarly apply to student athletes. Colleges and universities manage the educational experiences and limit the freedoms of student athletes; yet, student athletes can also exert their power as athletes spinning the wheels of the athletic machine. Without the revenues generated by the labor of the student athletes in the revenue sports, colleges and universities would be bound by the mercy of the athletes.

## **Subjectivity**

Feminists who find issue with the subject constituted through discursive practices question the passivity of this shaped subject. In their eyes, this supposed passive subject lacks agency and the ability to change into or assume more powerful subject positions.

Poststructuralists would counter by stating that the assumption of varying subject positions, particularly those which include what Weedon (1999) called “the dimension of agency” (p. 104) clearly demonstrate that while discursive practices may form the range of available subject positions, they do not preclude a particular subject position. In other words, they do not determine an inevitable subject position. By troubling the concept of the subject, many feminists think it reduces the possibility of “full subjectivity” (Weedon, 1997, p. 139) which describes an attainment of or access to all possible subject positions. While “full subjectivity” (Weedon, 1997, p. 39) may appear as the ultimate feminist goal, I would offer subjectivity as a site of becoming versus an end goal or final destination.

**Identity politics.** Another criticism of poststructuralism is related to the feminist movements of the 1970s where “the spirit of sisterhood” or the “essence of womanhood” (Weedon, 1999, p. 105) was viewed as absent. The feminist movement sought to find common ground shared by all women in order to mobilize in volume to wage political war for women’s rights. Feminists viewed the ideas of poststructuralism as going against identity politics—a mobilization of women for common aims against patriarchal structures of female oppression based on the poststructural vision of female subjectivity as “internally fractured and often contradictory” (Weedon, 1999, p. 105). Poststructuralism questions the notion of womanhood which is shared by all women everywhere. In contrast, poststructuralism recognizes the unique needs and concerns of women based on race, class, and sexuality that

may or may not align with others' views of womanhood and what it is to be a woman. Conventional views of womanhood are often aligned with "white middle-class polemic" (Weedon, 1999, p. 106), giving rise to another layer of oppression within a movement aimed to reduce or eliminate oppression toward women. As summarized by Weedon (1999),

Poststructuralism suggests that ideas of shared identity are not the obvious outcome of being of colour, lesbian or working-class but discursively produced in relation to hegemonic discourses which privilege whiteness, heterosexuality and the middle and upper classes. (p. 106-107)

Moreover, poststructuralism adheres to pluralism, which seeks to address and encompass varying viewpoints and the range of the unique, distinct qualities of all individuals (Weedon, 1999). Political mobilization in poststructuralism favors a focus on "shared oppression" over "shared identities" (Weedon, 1999, p. 107). Identity politics references the political movement or activism associated with all women identified as a holistic group based solely on the characteristic of gender. Identity politics aligns with a universalist view of women which can often be stereotypical of common discourse which excludes many women who do not identify with normative ideals of womanhood. I argue that identity politics is a move toward a unified, fixed subject and essentialist view of womanhood found in liberal humanism. While identity politics can be viewed as a means to appropriate gains for women everywhere, I observe its potential to limit agency for women rather than establish it. In its aims to create more opportunities or available subject positions for women, it may constrain the identifiable and realizable positions available for most women.

***Identity politics related to student athletes.*** In relation to my dissertation project, student athletes are also subject to identity politics. Student athletes are viewed in

stereotypical ways based on their participation in college sports, such as being viewed as not as academically capable as non-athletes. The essentialist views of athletes are especially prevalent for Black male athletes, which are commonly viewed as physically adept and academically inept. Identity politics takes groups such as student athletes and fails to recognize the unique characteristics of individuals such as race and gender that create different lived experiences. The presence of identity politics in college sports can be an attempt to marginalize certain groups of athletes such as Black male athletes and cover over their experiences. One of the purposes of my study is to move away from identity politics and draw attention to the specific racial experiences of Black male athletes of marginalization and exploitation in collegiate athletics.

The common critiques of poststructuralism can prove productive toward further inquiry by using a post-qualitative research design to show how theory can be used as a form of analysis. I now offer a brief description of the specific poststructural concepts used in my dissertation project and their relationship to a poststructural framework.

### **Poststructural Concepts Related to Dissertation Study**

In the previous sections, I established a rationale for the use of poststructural theory as a means to analyze the presence of athletics in higher education and provided an overview of the common critiques of poststructuralism. Within the larger framework of poststructural theories of language, subjectivity, and power are two concepts that became vital to my analysis. The concepts of *marginality* by Spivak and *mattering* by Butler both provide unique ways of viewing the *doings* of collegiate athletics through a theoretical lens. In my post-qualitative study, I use the theoretical concepts of marginality and mattering as an analytic method to point out the ways that collegiate athletics can come *undone* or be *done*

differently. By problematizing the ways collegiate athletics is currently done, a space is created for recommending ways of *redoing* big-time college sports programs.

### **Marginality**

Spivak (1993) described that the work of the poststructural is “persistently to critique a structure that one cannot not (wish to) inhabit” (p. 284) and following this call, I use her concept of marginality to point out the ways individuals are ensnared in the trappings of the athletic machine. Spivak’s (1993) coined a term called “outside in” to describe how individuals oppose a structure (outside), such as collegiate athletics, while simultaneously needing to stay safely *within* that same structure. This dangerous double move illustrates the presence of the poststructural primary ideas of language, subjectivity, and power within the concept of marginality. The imbalance of power present within the structure of collegiate athletics relegates many to marginalized positions. The marginalization of individuals is highlighted in my study by how quickly Mary Willingham was ostracized by the university after her whistleblowing, how the African/Afro-American Studies Department is further marginalized by being used to maintain the academic eligibility of athletes, and how athletes are exploited by the institution’s desire for notoriety and profit. Structures, such as collegiate athletics, use language as a weapon to “name” individuals such as those highlighted in my study—Willingham, the African/Afro-American Studies Department, and student athletes, as *Other*, those pushed to the fringes of society as those who have less value or *matter* less than others. This naming of individuals as marginal contributes to the shifting subjectivities of those individuals, where they are forced to enact certain subject positions.

## **Mattering**

Poststructuralism offers a way to study how language constitutes subjects and contributes to their constantly changing identity formations. In the case of collegiate athletics, I assert that the discursive and material structures of collegiate athletics contributes to the oppression of individuals. Butler (2004) stated that “to be oppressed means that you already exist as a subject of some kind, you are there as the visible and oppressed other for the master subject, as a possible or potential subject” (p. 30). Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering draws attention to how the big-time college sports programs are structured in ways that discursively mark individuals as those that matter and those that do not matter in the same ways, shaping subjectivities. In other words, poststructural theories of language and power allowed me to see how colleges and universities are composed of primarily White leadership and student bodies in stark contrast to the profit sports teams of football and basketball primarily composed of Black male athletes.

## **Analytical Questions Using Poststructural Concepts**

These poststructural concepts of marginality and mattering helped me to think with theory and my research questions to emerge. The following analytical questions were developed to further explore how these concepts can be productive to a transformed thinking about collegiate athletics, and more specifically the recent scandal at UNC. I posed these analytical questions as part of my study employing a post-qualitative research design. The first two analytical questions relate to Spivak’s (1993) concept of marginality and the last two questions pertain to Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering.

- How can the viewing of big-time sports programs as the athletic machine disrupt the acceptance of athletics in higher education?

- How can the concept of marginality be used to see how individuals are *outside in* the athletic machine?
- In the field of collegiate athletics, and more specifically the UNC scandal, how do bodies emerge as those that matter—and why?
- How can the concept of mattering disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics?

These analytical questions aided in my interrogation of the acceptance of athletics in higher education presented in the form of conceptual tales in “Chapter 6: A Tale of Marginality” and “Chapter 7: A Tale of Mattering” of my study. This overview of the theoretical concepts, marginality and mattering, lays the foundation for how I used theory as a method to analyze the topic of my dissertation study: collegiate athletics, through the textual resources of the recent UNC scandal. In the next chapter of my dissertation, I describe how I analyzed the paradoxes of academics and athletics in higher education through a poststructural lens. Within this discussion, I also explain how writing as a method of analysis is instrumental in the generative process of post-qualitative inquiry. In the next chapter, I further describe how a post-qualitative methodology creates new ways of seeing college sports programs and proves productive toward an *undoing* of the ways collegiate athletics is currently *done*.



## Chapter 4: A Tale of Two Frameworks: Theory and Method

*The aim of post-qualitative research is “to produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently.”*

*(St. Pierre, 1997, p. 175)*

In my dissertation project, I have put to work poststructural theory and post-qualitative inquiry, entangled together, by *undoing* the current *doings* of collegiate athletics in order to disrupt both the status-quo acceptance and the privileging of athletics (big-time sports programs) inside higher education. I also created a path to *undo* traditional qualitative research by practicing an inquiry that is *done* differently through the use of theory and writing *as* method. Post-qualitative inquiry disrupts methodological boundaries by pushing against traditional research binaries that fix meanings and privilege structural hierarchies. For example, in conventional qualitative research, binary relationships between method/theory, data/theory, and data collection/analysis dominate the research framework. The consequence of stabilizing the oppositions between method/theory or data/theory is not only privileging one term over the other but also separating the practices into discrete, knowable categories. However, post-qualitative inquiry refuses the separation of theory and method and instead blurs the lines, intricately linking *theory as method*. What comes *undone*, then, in traditional qualitative research are the clear distinctions between theory, method, data, fieldwork, and analysis, as well as the privileging of, for example, methods and data over theory. Thus, in post-qualitative research, the *re-doing* of inquiry is to produce an entirely new orientation, a new starting place.

Post-qualitative inquiry starts with theories in the “posts:” postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and/or posthumanism—rather than starting with method.

In the same way, I began my inquiry by studying deeply the philosophical works by theorists such as Foucault, Spivak, and Butler. I used theory as my method to see how I could study an educational topic of concern, such as collegiate athletics. That is, my methodological approach to this dissertation was rooted in letting the theory lead the way and determine the direction of my inquiry. In my study, the poststructural concepts of marginality and mattering guided me in using theory to problematize the normalization of big-time sports programs on college campuses. Specifically, my post-qualitative venture examines textual resources from the recent scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) in which athletes were deliberately enrolled in sham academic courses designed to ensure the academic eligibility of players, not graduation. Because I encountered this scandal after having studied theory, my approach was to bring along the philosophical concepts of marginality by Spivak and mattering by Butler as a form of analysis in order to claim a new territory of working theory and method alongside one another. As a mode of representation, I present my analysis in the style of different theoretical tales (Van Maanen, 2011) because I used theory *as* my method to analyze the topic of my dissertation study. This style of representation does not separate the theory from the representation; rather, in the vein of post-qualitative methodologies, the theory is woven into the tapestry of my analytical representation, illustrating the inseparability of theory and method.

My dissertation study started with the reading of philosophy, those texts that no one told me were too hard to read. By reading deeply the works of Spivak and Butler, I began to envision how I could use theory as my method of analysis for this dissertation. As I immersed myself in the theory, the theory accompanied me and became an integral part of how I read other texts, such as those analyzed in this study related to the field of collegiate

athletics. That is, I read the texts about collegiate athletics, in particular, the recent UNC scandal, through the lens of theory. It is from this philosophical work of using theory as method that the following analytical questions emerged:

- How can the viewing of big-time sports programs as the athletic machine disrupt the acceptance of athletics in higher education?
- How can the concept of marginality be used to see how individuals are *outside in* the athletic machine?
- In the field of collegiate athletics, and more specifically the UNC scandal, how do bodies emerge as those that matter—and why?
- How can the concept of mattering disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics?

These analytic questions are a feature of a “thinking with theory” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) approach to post-qualitative inquiry. In traditional qualitative research, the questions that typically guide a project are grounded in people’s experiences and perceptions; conventional research questions are driven *by* method that uncovers a supposed pre-existing reality. However, analytic questions *emerge* in the middle of reading and thinking *across* multiple texts, discourses, realities, subjectivities, and so on. The framing of analytic questions includes the theoretical concepts to signal an approach that is non-linear, non-hierarchical, and that entangles theory, method, data, and representation.

The theories of marginality (Spivak) and mattering (Butler) roamed throughout the textual resources, bringing me along with them, to produce different ways of undoing collegiate athletics. In this new open territory, with everything on the same plane, theory was free to wander back and forth throughout the pages of the textual resources with an aim to

highlight episodes within the scandal where the theory provides a new and different reading of the events. For example, Butler's concept of mattering continued to land on the pages of the scandal about the exploitation of student athletes, primarily Black athletes, which helped my analysis take off toward critiquing the prevalence of racism in collegiate athletics and how the race of individuals plays a central role in how bodies come to matter. The nomadic journey of theory through the texts produced the analytical questions in the middle of thought.

In the remainder of this methodology chapter, I describe the fundamental features of post-qualitative qualitative research in order to show how these unique features produce knowledge differently. Within this discussion, I justify why a post-qualitative research design is appropriate for this project and explain its potential toward an *undoing* of collegiate athletics. Next, I identify the textual resources used as the basis for my theoretical analysis of collegiate athletics. As part of the post-qualitative research design, I then detail how I employed a technique called "thinking with theory" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) where I use philosophical concepts to help me think differently about the recent scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). Additionally, I provide an explanation of why my representation is offered in the form of conceptual tales coupled with a depiction of the features of a typical realist account. Throughout this methodology chapter, I provide examples of how my analysis was formed through the generative combination of both theory and writing as a method to think about the easy acceptance of academics and athletics in higher education through the textual resources from the recent UNC scandal.

## Post-Qualitative Inquiry

Post-qualitative inquiry extends beyond the current definition of qualitative research which takes up many positivist design principles and features. Post-qualitative research diverts the path of traditional qualitative research that continues on a linear trail searching for meaning, truth, and a final destination. Instead of this linear path, post-qualitative research is not a recipe that others can precisely follow to create the same end product or result. St. Pierre (1997) urged that we should question and challenge the limits of traditional research methods so that we may move outside those boundaries “to produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently” (p. 175). Thus, this refusal of traditional methods marks the shift toward post-qualitative inquiry.

Post-qualitative research represents a departure from conventional qualitative research by emphasizing the use of philosophy and theoretical concepts throughout the entire research process, from the questions that are asked to the style of representation. St. Pierre (2014) used

the rather large and ambiguous term ‘post qualitative’ to mark....the impossibility of an intersection between conventional humanist qualitative methodology and ‘the posts.’ Acknowledging that impossibility can help clear the way for what I hope will be a multitude of different possibilities for post qualitative inquiry—perhaps for *post inquiry*. (p. 3)

My work in this dissertation study is representative of the “different possibilities” that can come from post-qualitative inquiry. I begin by discussing the unique features of post-qualitative inquiry: 1) anti-method, 2) the use of theory, 3) a reconceptualization of data, 4) writing as analysis, and 5) a troubling of commonsense thinking. Following my discussion

of the characteristics of post-qualitative inquiry, I explain how each of these particular elements were put to work in my own research project.

### **Post-Qualitative Inquiry: Anti-Method**

My approach takes on a refusal of traditional method. As stated by Nealon and Giroux (2012), “The relation between researcher, research object, and relevant data is much more recursive and expedient. ‘Method’ and ‘Methodology’ are in a much more ‘liquid’ state” (p. 308). This blurring of both method and methodology creates the space for a new way of thinking. In my work, I have refused traditional methods in favor of a philosophically informed thinking with theoretical concepts. My inquiry involves a living and thinking with the textual resources of the event of the UNC scandal while looking and seeing through the eyes of the theorists, Butler (1993) and Spivak (1993), breeding an intimacy within a new assemblage of researcher, data, theorists, theory, and concepts.

As noted by St. Pierre (2011), the prescribed order and techniques of traditional qualitative research are in stark contrast to post-qualitative research where “there is no model for this work, since each researcher and each study requires different writing” (p. 971). In regards to post-qualitative research such as that presented in my study, I cannot offer a step-by-step model (or prescriptive method) for others to follow, because post-qualitative research is a work of difference, not replication.

### **Post-Qualitative Inquiry: The Use of Theory**

St. Pierre (2011) declared that we “desperately need theories, interpretive frameworks, for analyzing data rather than more and/or better methods for collecting it, else they produce poorly conceived and theorized work” (p. 614). By continuing to read poststructural theory and delving into the concepts of *marginality* and *mattering*, I was able

to generate my study's overarching question and the supporting analytical questions explored throughout my project. Post-qualitative inquiry is a "call for philosophically informed inquiry accomplished by inquirers who have read and studied philosophy" (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 623), and I followed this call in my own reading, studying, and re-reading philosophy as a continual process. My analytical process included not only reading the textual resources related the UNC scandal, but also reading the theory by Spivak and Butler. Most importantly, post-qualitative inquiry includes re-reading the theory and the texts by reading the texts through the theory and the theory through the texts. Kirby (2012) also observed this process as:

the enduring theme in Butler's work, namely that the labour of reading/writing involves an inventiveness that can provide us with different political perspectives and possibilities. The stated hope that drives the exchange is that it 'recasts (and retrieves) philosophy as a critical mode of inquiry that belongs-antagonistically-to the sphere of politics.' (Kirby, 2012, p. 141, citing Butler)

Marcus and Fischer (1999) also asserted that "history is better conceived as spiral rather than circular" (p. 9-10) and I would maintain the same about my research process. A circular reference implies a beginning and an end and a continuous circle of repetitiveness; whereas a spiral offers the space for change and variation, the difference. The spiral analysis is representative of my work in this dissertation project. As I worked through the analysis phases of my study, I revisited the textual resources about the recent UNC scandal and the theories of Spivak (marginality) and Butler (mattering). Each time I came back to the texts, it was a different reading of the text through the theories of Spivak and Butler. This is a continual process of returning and arriving, where I returned to the texts and theories which

helped me arrive at new ways of seeing shaped as my conceptual analysis of collegiate athletics.

### **Post-Qualitative Inquiry: Reconceptualizing Data**

Another aspect of conventional qualitative research involves how data are viewed. In traditional qualitative studies, data are positioned as empirical evidence that can be captured and known. However, a post-qualitative approach takes a different stance: giving up the separatist view toward data, data collection, and data analysis and enabling the space for the entanglement and unpredictability of inquiry where “one can think the unthought” (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 620). In post-qualitative inquiry, data moves beyond that collected in the field through methods such as interviews and observation. Data extends to include the words of theorists and inquirers (researchers). St. Pierre (2011) likened this practice to “if one has read and read and read, it’s nigh onto impossible *not* to think with what others have thought and written” (p. 622) and I also found this to be true in my own dissertation project. Through my repeated readings of the theory associated with my study, the words of the theorists became so aligned with my own thinking that the theories turned into my own way of thinking. Thus, at times, it was difficult to separate my own thoughts from the words of the theorists like Spivak and Butler. Post-qualitative methodology goes past the traditional interpretive qualitative frameworks that search for meaning and answers (i.e., that which can be known) to break open that which is assumed to be known or knowable. The intent is to trouble supposed meaning to the point that we instead look to see the generative conditions that *enable* a constructed meaning’s productive effects/affects. In this study, my intent was to trouble collegiate athletics as the way it is or the status quo. My aim was to look at not what is already known or what there is to “know” about college sports, but to look deeper into the



field of collegiate athletics, through the use of the UNC scandal, and question the origins and conditions that enable the continued operations of athletics in higher education.

As post-qualitative methodology pushed my thinking to its limit, I viewed data (or what I describe as textual resources) prismatically to see how a single data piece or chunk could be refracted (broken open) into different beams of light (ways of seeing). Through my reading and analysis of the recent UNC scandal, I also had to resist the urge to present every event in the scandal. Instead, in my analysis of the UNC scandal, certain episodes of difference and significance within the scandal surfaced as those that were rich for analysis using the theoretical concepts of marginality and mattering. In other words, when reading the textual resources about the UNC scandal, I read them through the lens of the different theoretical concepts to see how those concepts provided a different reading and viewing of the UNC scandal. The events analyzed as part of my study were not determined at the beginning of my study; instead, the events emerged as I was reading about the scandal while thinking *with* the theoretical concepts of the machine, marginality, and mattering. Put another way, I allowed the theory to lead me to the areas where theory could provoke a different reading of the scandal. Three distinctive episodes spoke to me as keen examples of how marginality and mattering were evident in the scandal: 1) the whistleblowing of Mary Willingham, 2) the role of the African/Afro-American Studies Department, and 3) the exploitation of student athletes<sup>5</sup>.

### **Post-Qualitative Inquiry: Writing As Analysis**

Post-qualitative inquiry uses theory as a tool to challenge the way things are in the world around us. Toward this goal, I used poststructural theory as a means to trouble the

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<sup>5</sup> (I more fully discuss these episodes in “Chapter 6: A Tale of Marginality” and “Chapter 7: A Tale of Mattering.”)

acceptance of athletics, more specifically big-time sports programs, within colleges and universities by forming the overarching question of my dissertation study: What does collegiate athletics do? I was able to craft this bigger question of my project by not only using theory as a means to think about ways to *undo* collegiate athletics or how collegiate athletics might be *done* differently, but most significantly, through the use of writing. In my work, writing as a way to put the theory to work enabled me to think in ways impossible without the reading-writing-thinking-theory assemblage through only thinking. Put another way, when there were seemingly no thoughts to be thought as I tried to think about the aspects of the scandal while thinking with the theory, I put my pencil to paper and the thoughts emerged with each word that appeared on the paper. Thus, through the process of writing, the analysis for my dissertation project was shaped. The writing was not a linear process where page one was followed by page two. Rather, sometimes page thirty-two turned into page one. As described by St. Pierre (2011), I realize that only through writing was I able to complete the analysis presented as part of my dissertation study, because “writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery [original emphasis]” (p. 967).

### **Post-Qualitative Inquiry: Troubling Commonsense Thinking**

A post-qualitative methodology is best suited for this approach because its intent is to disrupt established ways of thinking, such as the presence of big-time sports programs in higher education, by exposing new ways of thinking about the social world. In relation to this particular project, the presence of athletics in higher education is, in many ways, accepted as *the way it is*. By *the way it is*, I am also referring to the presence of athletics and big-time sports programs on college campuses as an accepted way of life or more accurately, the

status quo. The status quo, in this case, is the supposed parallel existence of athletics and academics in higher education. I argue that we must question its accepted presence or more accurately its entrenchment within the field of higher education. I embarked on this study as a “disruption of common sense, [by] doing the unexpected” (Marcus & Fischer, 1999, p. 137). I engaged in post-inquiry to form a new and fresh assemblage of researcher (myself), data (texts), theorists (Butler and Spivak), and concepts (marginality and mattering). As stated by Butler (1990/2006), I sought to “open up the field of possibility ... without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized” (p. viii).

In summary, I perceive post-qualitative inquiry as a viewing beyond the lens toward a prismatic viewing where data, theorists/theories, and researcher all converge through a medium (the prism) bursting forth into an inseparable, entangled field where I push past the repetitive sameness of a monochromatic, monotone viewing of data. This bursting forth explodes into something fresh, something new. Post-qualitative research goes off the grid of legibility and duplicability toward a new, uncharted territory. As vividly described by St. Pierre (2011),

Each researcher who puts the “posts” to work will create a *different articulation, remix, mash-up, assemblage, a becoming* of inquiry that is not *a priori*, inevitable, necessary, stable, or repeatable but is, rather, created spontaneously in the middle of the task at hand, which is always already *and, and, and* ... (p. 620)

Post-qualitative inquiry seeks to expose the limitations of a single truth or meaning, and in my project, I looked at the UNC scandal through the lens of theory to see what I could not see without a theoretical lens. By viewing different aspects of the scandal through the eyes of

the theorists, I was able to point to areas of difference that expose the *doings* (operations) of collegiate athletics.

In my overview of the unique features of post-qualitative inquiry, I have discussed how this type of inquiry refuses traditional methods and instead uses theory *as* method, redefines what is data in research, uses writing as a form of analysis, and generates a new way of thinking. In the next section, I detail in more specific ways how I applied these tenets in my inquiry. First, I describe how I reconceptualized data in my own research project through the use of textual resources. Following that discussion, I move on to how I used theory *as* a method for my analysis, which enabled a problematization of the status quo or the way it is in the field of collegiate athletics, the topic of my dissertation project. Lastly, I explain how I crafted two conceptual tales using the theories of Spivak and Butler through the use of writing as a method of analysis.

### **The Use of Textual Resources**

This exploration of the paradoxes of academics and athletics in higher education is a move beyond traditional qualitative inquiry. This study did not seek out the traditionalist data sets of interviews, focus groups, or observations, but sought to take that which is *always already* enough: textual resources from the event of the UNC academic scandal within collegiate athletics. In the case of the UNC scandal, the use of textual resources for research illustrates the enough-ness of already present data, that which is around us. There was no need to re-interview the key players in the scandal or find other people or things touched by the scandal's tentacles. I use the term "textual resources" as opposed to "data" in a deliberate move to resist the easy use of familiar terms often associated with traditional qualitative research methods. I define textual resources as the use of resources that already exist or pre-

exist the efforts of the researcher, whereas traditional research results from the efforts or methods of the researcher. The text *Cheated: The UNC Scandal, the Education of Athletes, and the Future of Big-time College Sports* (2015) is my primary resource for the UNC academic scandal, supplemented by articles from *The News & Observer* newspaper. *Cheated* (2015) was penned by two university employees, Willingham, a former academic tutor within the athletic support program, and Smith, a current tenured professor of History. *The News & Observer* was the first publication to report Willingham's personal account of the UNC scandal with Dan Kane being the first to report her event of whistleblowing.

I used textual resources for research purposes in order to take data already present and show how data is always excessive and saturated, or as Jackson and Mazzei (2012) wrote "dense and mutli-layered" (p. vii). Another way to view the use of textual resources is to take resources and re-source them or put them to another use or purpose. The use of theories and concepts in "the posts" shows how the suppleness of the data can be turned upside down and inside out to reveal "what is not said, what discourses make it impossible to say, what practical and theoretical logics hide away from sight" (Miller, Whalley, & Stronach, 2011, p. 307). In this way, textual resources can be opened up to show the multiple angles of the story that are not visible or presented. In collegiate athletics, common discourse states that athletic programs greatly benefit colleges and universities by bringing notoriety and additional funding to support both academic and athletic programs. What common discourse does not make visible is all the ways athletic programs can undermine the core educational mission of colleges and universities by compromising academic integrity in favor of athletic success. Data is always excessive and saturated while also being partial and incomplete; that is, a

surface reading of a resource can be disturbed by a familiarity with theory and concepts that help us to think beyond a quick shallow reading.

As a researcher, I decidedly make the cuts in data, what to present, what to show, what to hide, what to leave out; I have made a cut in the research materials to be analyzed for this study by selecting the text written by the university employees, Smith and Willingham, accompanied by newspapers articles from *The News & Observer*. As the angles of this scandal are numerous, I have also cut the perspectives to study and analyze as part of this project. That is, I made cuts within the textual resources based on what *emerged* during my reading of the texts through the theoretical lenses of marginality and mattering. In other words, the emergence of specific episodes from the larger scandal seemed to “glow” (MacLure, 2013, p. 228) in response to my reading theory: the events seemed so common-sense that they were ripe for a different interpretation. In the analysis chapters of this dissertation, I focus on three primary areas of the scandal: the whistleblowing of Mary Willingham, the complicity of the African/Afro-American Studies Department and its Chair, Julius Nyang’oro, and the exploitation of student athletes. Through the use of the texts written by the university employees, the resources are relayed from what Jackson and Mazzei (2012) called a “unique position” (p. 47). As employees, they inhabit the intimate space *inside* the university where the scandal is generated. Although the employees possess an intimate knowledge of university operations, they are also *outside* the university when they decide to go public about the unethical academic practices involving student athletes. “According to Spivak, deconstructionists do their work from within (from an intimacy with the structure); it is that very with-ness that enables critique of the limits of the structure, or how it limits life,” wrote Jackson and Mazzei (2012, p. 39). To further show how a critique

of societal structures reveals how life can be limited by the acceptance of the status quo, I used an analytical process of thinking with theoretical concepts, discussed next.

### **Thinking with Theory**

As I discussed previously, post-qualitative methodology puts theory to work throughout the entire process of inquiry. “Thinking with theory” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) is a methodological approach within a post-qualitative framework, and in my project, I “thought with” theorists by “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. viii) the topic of the UNC scandal to various theoretical concepts such as marginality and mattering. These particular concepts emerged in the process of reading the literature while thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) and are necessary because of their usefulness toward a transformed thinking about the UNC scandal. *Marginality* is a concept conceived by Spivak (1993) which explicates how individuals in the margins can be pushed toward the center in a move to give a false sense of prominence and significance. *Mattering* is a term I use to describe a range of ideas from Butler’s (1993) work, *Bodies That Matter*, in which she theorizes how certain conditions permit some bodies to matter while other bodies do not matter in the same ways. These concepts are discussed further in the analytic chapters, “Chapter 6: A Tale of Marginality” and “Chapter 7: A Tale of Mattering.”

I used theory to deconstruct methodological assumptions as I was “thinking with theory” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) as part of the research process. Butler’s (1990/2006) work on subjectivity, gender, sexuality, and performativity opens up possibilities for a new way of thinking and seeing. Butler’s (1990/2006, 1993, 2004) continual profound questioning throughout her texts helps us to see that her own foundational work on feminist and queer theory only opened up more questions for her rather than answers. Butler helps me trouble

how social and cultural practices and language all shape gendered and racial subjectivities of individuals within the realm of collegiate athletics. In particular, this troubling shows how these practices produce different subjectivities, such as how student athletes are named as both students and athletes. Through this dual naming, the subjectivities of student athletes are constantly shifting through the tug and pull of academics and athletics. In the words of Kirby (2012) as she referred to Butler's work,

Its stated aim is trouble-making. It *intends* [original emphasis] to cause discomfort ... to unsettle the ideological grammars that confer significance. Its nuisance value is inexhaustible because there is no reassurance at the end of this questioning, no promise of resolution that will still the uncertainty. (p. 130)

Thus, in my project, I make *trouble* in the field of collegiate athletics by disrupting both the acceptance and privileging of athletics (big-time sports programs) inside higher education to disturb the tranquility of the athletic machine's deceptive labeling of athletes as student athletes. I used an analytical process of "plugging in" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. viii) in order to take the textual resources of the recent UNC scandal and "plug" them into the theories of Spivak (marginality) and Butler (mattering) to see what newness could be generated through the viewing of different episodes of the scandal through a theoretical lens.

### **"Plugging In"**

The process of "plugging in" is a post-methodological venture about "cutting into the center, opening it up to see what newness might be incited" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. viii). "Plugging in" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2011, p. viii) is a term to describe the process of applying different philosophical concepts to a topic to see what may be created through this assemblage of researcher, topic, theorists, and philosophical concepts. Jackson and Mazzei



(2012) formed a new analytical process of “thinking with theory” by “plugging in” (p. 1) to different texts –or what Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) called “little machines” (p. 4)—into each other and different philosophical concepts. This is a way of thinking theoretically and methodologically together to form something new. As an assemblage of “machines,” there are endless possibilities of creations as the researcher takes a unique set of theories, concepts, and texts while connecting to different texts and concepts. Three distinct moves denote the “plugging in” process:

- 1) putting philosophical concepts to work via disrupting the theory/practice binary by decentering each and instead showing how they *constitute or make one another*,
- 2) being deliberate and transparent in what analytical questions are made possible by a specific theoretical concept....and how the questions that are used to think with *emerged in the middle* of plugging in; and
- 3) working the same data chunks repeatedly to “deform [them], to make [them] groan and protest” with an overabundance of meaning, which in turn not only creates new knowledge but also show the *suppleness of each when plugged in* [original emphasis]. (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 5)

My “plugging in” process started with reading Butler (1990/2006, 1993, 2004) and Spivak (1993) which allowed me to see how I could apply their philosophical concepts to a particular issue in higher education such as collegiate athletics. It is from this philosophical work that I formed the following analytical questions:

- How can the viewing of big-time sports programs as the athletic machine disrupt the acceptance of athletics in higher education?

- How can the concept of marginality be used to see how individuals are *outside in* the athletic machine?
- In the field of collegiate athletics, and more specifically the UNC scandal, how do bodies emerge as those that matter—and why?
- How can the concept of mattering disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics?

As I read about the changing state of collegiate athletics in the United States, my knowledge of theoretical concepts helped me develop analytical questions about this phenomenon. As I turned the pages to read about numerous scandals within big-time sports programs, my thoughts were interrupted by my reading of works by theorists such as Butler (1990/2006, 1993, 2004) and Spivak (1993). I was re-minded of how the words of both Butler and Spivak help me to think differently about the world around me. For example, when I read about phenomena such as scandals in the field of collegiate athletics, the admission of underprepared athletes, and the drive to maintain player eligibility, I was re-minded of Spivak's concept of marginality and how she helped me see how the world has a central drive to *name* and valorize the *Other* for capital gain. When I read about the violence of the athletic machine, I was also re-minded of how Butler helped me think otherwise about how the bodies of athletes are so quickly cast aside as not only replaceable, but disposable. My reading of the literature about collegiate athletics and the concepts of Butler and Spivak represented the beginning of a continued different thinking about the presence of athletics and academics in higher education.

To push myself toward a “thinking at [my] limit” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 5), I employed the analytical process of “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 1) as a way of

thinking theoretically and methodologically together to analyze the textual resources of the UNC scandal. As I examined the textual resources of the UNC scandal to explore the paradoxes of academics and athletics in higher education, I took the intimacy of those closest to the event to explore the structure of collegiate athletics. I used the theoretical concepts of *matterings* and *marginality* and thought *with* them in, around, and through the athletic machine. In other words, I labored in the direction of a new production of knowledge that may be generated through the “plugging in” of the textual resources about the UNC scandal into those philosophical concepts.

To present these new productions of knowledge, I created a novel way of representation in the form of conceptual tales, and the next section discusses how and why I crafted three different tales: a realist tale and two analytical, post-tales. I begin the next section by explaining why I use tales to present the analysis for my study. I then describe the features of a realist tale and how it contrasts with the analytical tales shaped by poststructural theory and concepts. It is important for the reader to understand the contrasts between a realist tale and “post” tales because the purpose of my work is to show how theory can be used as a method to produce a different reading of a text such as that provided in a realist tale.

### **The Telling of Tales**

As a stylistic move that aligns with post-qualitative methodology, I present my theoretical analysis in the form of different tales. I use the term “tales” as coined by Van Maanen (2011) to describe ways of presenting ethnographic accounts of fieldwork experiences. Although the tales I present are not ethnographic as traditionally defined, a result of a fieldwork experience, I posit these tales as ethnographic in an alternate sense. Van

Maanen (2011) described ethnography as a “written representation of a culture” (p. 1). Following this definition, the tales I present are different written or narrative accounts of the culture of collegiate athletics, more specifically the UNC scandal. Van Maanen (2011) stated that the subject of ethnography is culture and its method is fieldwork; the subject of my exploration is the unique culture known as collegiate athletics or big-time sports programs within higher education. In post theories, “data is ... always being re-told and re-membered” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 3). In this move toward a new presentation of the case of the UNC scandal, I first describe how I fashioned a realist version of the tale of the UNC scandal.

### **The Crafting of a Realist Tale**

My purpose in presenting a realist tale prior to the analysis chapters is to present the tale of the UNC scandal in a traditional, journalistic manner to show how thinking with theoretical concepts can help re-present the story in new and different ways that will allow people to think differently about the scandal and its implications for the future of academics and athletics in higher education. Because I am using theories from “the posts” to *trouble* realist accounts, I use the realist tale to set up one of multiple versions of post-tales as detailed in the subsequent chapters titled “Chapter 6: A Tale of Marginality” and “Chapter 7: A Tale of Mattering.” Van Maanen (2011) identified that “a realist tale offers one reading and culls its facts carefully to support that reading” (pp. 52-53). Textual resources about collegiate athletics are often presented with a realist slant which provides justification for an alternate presentation of the tales of college sports programs. My intent was to take textual resources about collegiate athletics and show “what is not said, what discourses make it impossible to say, what practical and theoretical logics hide away from sight” (Miller,

Whalley, & Stronach, 2011, p. 307). The use of theories from “the posts” helped me to disrupt the standard journalistic presentation of stories about collegiate athletics by re-presenting the stories in an alternate way and saying what is *uncommonly* heard or allowed to be said. I propose a rare consciousness and daring awareness of *the way it is* in the field of collegiate athletics in order to resist the easy acceptance of the ascendancy and rule of athletics in higher education.

In summary, I ventured on the road of humanistic inquiry in the form of a realist tale for two purposes: 1) to provide an understanding of how a typical ethnographic story of a realist slant may read and 2) to provide a brief overview of the actual UNC scandal. Presenting a realist tale<sup>6</sup> of the UNC scandal provides the justification for a fresh and innovative approach to this research inquiry and also allows readers an additional opportunity to reference the details of the scandal.

**Limitations of a realist tale.** A realist tale has its limits. A realist tale focuses on the factual aspects of the story using the voice of a nameless individual. The neutrality of the realist voice leaves the reader void of any personal connection with the writer or the story itself. Another characteristic of a realist telling of a tale is the aim to take the experiences of one group of individuals and present it as the experience of all similar individuals. In relation to the UNC scandal, a realist telling presents the experiences of individuals such as tutors and athletes at UNC as the same or identical to those at all other universities. This move toward generalization seeks to remove the unique features of the story in an effort to create an oversimplification of the story.

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<sup>6</sup> The detailed account of the UNC scandal is located in Chapter 5: A Realist Tale.

However, unlike a teller of a formal tale, a post-tale does not set out to make broad generalizations that can apply to other similar situations. While a formal realist tale states facts of the events with certain conclusions, the telling of a post-tale makes a point to “play up what the authors don’t (quite) know rather than what they do” (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 170). Rather than presenting the tale from an authoritative viewpoint, a post-tale looks for the inconsistencies and spots of difference in the tale that lead to areas where one can question the status quo.

Van Maanen (2011) stated that “rarely is interpretive omnipotence candidly or overtly claimed in realist tales. It is simply a matter of closing off or nailing down an interpretation without allowing alternative views to creep into view” (p. 53). St. Pierre (2011) also reminded me “that any concept/category is a structure attempting to contain and close off meaning and, at the same time, that that concept/category is available to rupture and rethinking” (p. 616). The *category* of realist tale seeks a capture of meaning, yet in doing so, it produces the possibility of multiplicity of meaning in a re-telling of the tale. That is, a post-tale seeks what freshness and newness is created through the use of theory to find difference, rather than finding meaning and making sense of an event, like the UNC scandal. Borrowing from Jackson and Mazzei (2012), a realist tale is a “methodology-[with]-interpretivism” (p. viii) which seeks a fixity of meaning and stability; whereas, a post-tale taps into a “methodology-against-interpretivism [which] disrupts the centering compulsion of traditional qualitative research” (p. viii).

My presentation of a realist tale and the re-presentation of post-tales is a move against the dominant offerings of realist tales (Marcus & Fischer, 1999). To push against typical

qualitative research designs, I chose to develop tales that come after and go beyond that of a realist convention, tales from “the posts.”

### **Post-Tales**

I define post-tales as tales that are influenced by the theories and concepts of “the posts” and post-qualitative methodologies. Van Maanen (2011) points to the unique characteristics of a poststructural tale by stating:

First, there is typically an emphasis on those times where stable identities break down and the boundaries that structure identity collapse. Second, there is a focus on ... times and settings in which life is exaggerated and signifiers lack clear referents.

Third, there is something of an apocalyptic flair in poststructural tales representing newness, novelty, and end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it sensibility. (pp. 169-170)

An “end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it” (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 170) represents a disruption of common sense sought in post-qualitative ventures such as this dissertation study, where my goal is to trouble the status quo existence of athletics in higher education. I selected to present my forthcoming conceptual analyses as tales shaped by theories in “the posts” and post-qualitative methodologies, as I recognize each telling of a tale is simply a re-telling, a re-presentation, open to multiple tellings and representations. These post-tales offer different ways of seeing the events of the UNC scandal by looking through the eyes of different theorists (Spivak and Butler) using the philosophical concepts of marginality and mattering. Post-tales oppose the linear, predictable paths leading to traditional styles, formats, and presentations that stake out truth claims and ultimate conclusions. St. Pierre (2014) described the innovative analytical process of post-qualitative inquiry as:

Here I used concept as method. But this ‘method’ was not a prescriptive step-by-step procedure (e.g, interview, participant observation) described in advance of my study in some textbook that I could easily implement during ‘fieldwork.’ Instead, the concepts slowed down and reoriented my thinking about everything. (p. 7)

In a similar manner, my crafting of post-tales took the poststructural concepts of marginality and mattering as a way to pause and adjust my thinking about big-time college sports through a new reading of the recent UNC scandal.

**Characteristics of poststructural tales.** Van Maanen (2011) recognized the genre of poststructural tales as marked by “textual innovation, disorder, the wavering of meaning, and open-endedness” (p. 169). In the following sections, I highlight how each of these elements is present in the analytical tales of my dissertation study.

***Textual innovation.*** As both Butler and Spivak have taught me new ways of seeing the world, so too did I work to present the tales of the UNC scandal in an unconventional manner so that others may also see the world differently with a new, fresh set of eyes. By an unconventional manner, I describe the presentation of my analysis in the form of conceptual tales over a traditional dissertation chapter called “Findings,” which implies that an ultimate truth or end was found through the course of the study. In contrast, my analysis of collegiate athletics through the UNC scandal provides two versions of an analysis of collegiate athletics and more importantly, opens the door for additional theoretical analyses of the topic.

***Disorder and wavering of meaning.*** My goal in telling different versions of post-tales is to illustrate the possibility of disruptions and differences in a story rather than completeness and certainty as found in an interpretive tale. Post-tales are “inevitably inconclusive ... unfinished” (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 170) through their ability to question



static meaning and problematize common sense thinking about the social world. The aim of a post-tale is to resist the settling into stability and complacency of fixed meaning of academics and athletics harmoniously abiding together in higher education. The goal of a post-tale is not to reach an end, but to gesture toward endless new beginnings of how college sports programs are, and might be, viewed across the country. In this particular project, I focused on the field of collegiate athletics, and more specifically the case at UNC, and the theory as the philosophical concepts of marginality (Spivak) and mattering (Butler). The fluidity of reading literature and theory created a space where both theory and meaning were on the move. To illustrate, each time I read literature connected with collegiate athletics, I thought about how the specific philosophical concepts of *marginality* and *mattering* helped me to see the issues in ways not presented in the literature. For example, reading about Willingham's act of whistleblowing and the related consequences, Spivak's concept of marginality helped me to see how quickly the athletic machine marginalizes individuals when they are not actively supporting the university's goal to maintain player eligibility at all costs. Inversely, when I read the theory, the concepts discussed evoked my readings of the literature on collegiate athletics which facilitated how I could apply the theory to the literature. That is, I read the theory *through* my exposure to the stories about collegiate athletics, more specifically the recent UNC scandal. Also, when I read about the events of the UNC scandal, I viewed each event through the theories of Spivak and Butler. This vacillation shows how a reading and re-reading of both the literature and the theory opens the space to multiple viewpoints like those highlighted in my study: Mary Willingham, the African/Afro-American Studies Department and its Chair, Julius Nyang'oro, and student athletes.

*Open-endedness.* The beauty of a post-tale is its open-endedness, its generative nature. When I started to write the analytical tales using the concepts of Spivak and Butler, I had no idea where the concepts would take me in the telling of the tales about collegiate athletics. I let the concepts lead me to the different events within the scandal and in so doing, I was able to see those events differently than I did prior to the reading of theory. For example, before my reading of theory, I read the events of the scandal as clear, factual accounts with no room for further interpretation. After immersing myself in philosophy, and in particular, Spivak's (1993) concepts of the machine and marginality and Butler's (1993) concept of mattering, I was able to see new aspects of the scandal each time I revisited the textual resources. For example, only by reading about Spivak's theorizing of higher education as the teaching machine was I able to envision collegiate athletics in a similar manner as the athletic machine. The repurposing of her theoretical ideas about the teaching machine toward the topic of my dissertation study as the athletic machine provided the foundation for the analytical process that unfolded. Viewing big-time college sports programs as the athletic machine offered a new way to see collegiate athletics as a structure which is driven to achieve material gain at any cost.

To "diffract, rather than foreclose, thought" is the intent of a post-tale (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 5). My intent of creating conceptual tales was to leave myself (researcher) vulnerable to what reading theory by Spivak and Butler and philosophically informed thinking could expose within the literature about collegiate athletics. My writing of post-tales or a writing-while-thinking-with-theory focused on how the concepts of marginality and mattering could open up new ways of seeing the events of the UNC scandal through the generation of conceptual tales. My two analytical tales shaped by "the posts" go against the

liberal humanist interpretive style, such as the realist tale of the UNC scandal presented in Chapter 5, of “orthodox and rigid reporting templates, a spare, flat, detached, (and boring) writing style” (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 164). For example, in my writing of post-tales in the forthcoming analysis chapters of my dissertation, I first take Spivak’s (1993) concepts of the machine and marginality to show how Willingham, the African/Afro-American Studies Department, and the student athletes, were *outside in* the university’s athletic machine. I did not attempt to attach a fixed identity or label to Willingham, the African/Afro-American Studies Department, or the student athletes as *other* or *marginal*, but instead show how the university’s athletic machine is complicit in this attempted identification process. In the words of Spivak (1993), “Let us, then, for a moment at least, arrest the understandable need to fix and diagnose the identity of the most deserving marginal” (p. 61). Instead of a quick classification of individuals as marginalized, I moved to a diagnosis of how society enables the operations of structures such as the university athletic machine. After Spivak, I then turn to Butler (1993) to see how her concept of mattering helped me think in a different way about the scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) by opening up how race plays in a critical role in the ways certain bodies come to matter in the field of collegiate athletics. For example, Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering helped me draw attention to the ways race marks bodies as those that do not matter in the same ways as others, and how this is especially evident in the field of college sports.

### **Summary of the Tale of Two Frameworks**

In the previous sections of this chapter, I presented the main features of post-qualitative inquiry: 1) anti-method, 2) the use of theory, 3) a reconceptualization of data, 4) writing as analysis, and 5) a troubling of commonsense thinking. I then moved on to describe

the textual resources of the recent UNC scandal that serve as the basis for the theoretical analysis of my study. I also explained why the analysis phases of my study are presented in the form of two conceptual tales by contrasting the elements of a realist tale with that of a poststructural tale. In so doing, I presented an overview of how I created two different tales from “the posts.” I also presented my related analytical questions and described how the concepts of mattering (Butler) and marginality (Spivak) helped shape my analysis of the UNC scandal in the form of the conceptual tales to come.

In the remainder of my dissertation, readers will encounter three tales. The first tale is a realist account of the UNC scandal (see “Chapter 5: A Realist Tale”), in which I provide an overview of the details of how the scandal unfolds. In the realist tale, I highlight the three episodes of the scandal: 1) Willingham’s whistleblowing, 2) the role of the African/Afro-American Studies Department, and 3) the exploitation of student athletes, included within the two analysis chapters. The first analysis chapter, “Chapter 6: A Tale of Marginality,” I put to work Spivak’s (1993) concept of marginality to highlight how individuals are quickly cast aside the meet the athletic machine’s need for notoriety and financial profit . In the second analysis chapter, “Chapter 7: A Tale of Marginality,” I feature Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering to show how certain bodies emerge as those that matter more than others within the field of collegiate athletics. Lastly, I conclude my dissertation by reframing the operations of the athletic machine as the *doings* of collegiate athletics, summarizing how poststructural theory and post-qualitative methodology provided a method to *undo* collegiate athletics, and offering recommendations of how collegiate athletics can be *redone*.

## Chapter 5: A Realist Tale: The Scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

*“The university knowingly and eagerly admitted athletes with poor academic training or little or no interest in school and further served the needs of the athletic program by creating paths to academic eligibility year after year. Those eligibility paths led first to subtle compromises with academic principle and then finally to outright corruption.”*

*(Smith & Willingham, 2015, pp. 33-34)*

This realist tale<sup>7</sup> was crafted based on the text *Cheated: The UNC Scandal, the Education of Athletes, and the Future of Big-time College Sports* (2015) supplemented by articles from *The News & Observer* newspaper. *Cheated* (2015) was penned by two university employees, Willingham, a former reading specialist within the Academic Support Program for Athletes (ASPA), and Smith, a current tenured professor of History. *The News & Observer* was the first publication to report Willingham’s personal account of the UNC scandal with Dan Kane being the first to report her event of whistleblowing. This telling of the tale of the recent UNC scandal starts with an introduction overviewing UNC’s athletic programs and details three primary areas crucial to how the scandal developed. The three areas covered in this realist tale are: 1) Mary Willingham’s experience in the ASPA and her decision to go public about the questionable academic practices involving student athletes, 2) the creation of the African/Afro-American Studies curriculum and the appointment of Julius Nyang’oro, and 3) detailed accounts of three specific athletes at UNC: Michael McAdoo, Marvin Austin, and Julius Peppers.

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<sup>7</sup> A realist tale focuses on the factual aspects of a story. A more thorough explanation of the characteristics of a realist is discussed in “Chapter 4: A Tale of Two Frameworks: Theory and Method.”

## **Overview of UNC Athletic Programs**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) hosts student athletes participating in twenty-eight (28) different sports. Many of these student athletes attend UNC on athletic scholarships. As part of the scholarship agreements, students must maintain minimum academic standards to both continue scholarship continuity and player eligibility. A promissory exchange takes place of play for education. In exchange for performance in the classroom, students are offered the opportunity to participate in competitive intercollegiate athletics. Students are promised the opportunity to pursue an elite college education in exchange for their performance on the field. Of the 28 sports programs, men's football and basketball generate the majority of the revenue supporting the overall Athletic Department at UNC.

### **Mary Willingham**

Numerous individuals are employed within the ASPA, responsible for the advising and tutoring the volume of student athletes. In 2003, Mary Willingham began employment with UNC as a reading specialist within the Academic Support Program for Athletes (ASPA). As part of her duties at the ASPA, Willingham was assigned to work with student athletes in various sports programs across the university. Willingham met the prospect of helping student athletes succeed academically with both enthusiasm and optimism. As part of her duties, Willingham assessed the reading level of students, tutored students in various subjects. In Willingham's evaluations of student reading levels, she discovered many students were unable to complete college-level coursework. Students demonstrated frequent difficulty crafting sentences and paragraphs, even revealing they had never read a book. Her evaluations uncovered many students unqualified for college admission, yet accepted under a

separate, provisional clause called special admissions. Under special admission status, students can be considered for full admission after an evaluation by a special committee tasked with making a determination about the student's ability and potential.

Early in her tenure at UNC, Willingham was asked to assist a female athlete with a term paper. Willingham quickly realized the paper was plagued by plagiarism. When Willingham expressed her unease to others in the ASPA, her concerns were not validated, but ignored and quickly dismissed. Willingham later learned the student received a grade of B for the course. After this initial exposure to the high level of tolerance toward plagiarism, Willingham realized that no-show courses within the African and Afro-American Studies Department were commonplace. These so-called lecture courses routinely required no actual class meetings and only required a term paper at the end of the course. These courses were commonly known as "paper classes" (Kane, 2012, p. 2).

After this incidence of blatant plagiarism, Willingham shifted her focus toward students participating in non-revenue generating sports. Willingham's experience indicated that students within non-revenue generating sports were capable of completing the level of rigorous work required by the university. Later in 2008, Willingham was presented with another request to assist a football player with a term paper. This time the paper was not filled with plagiarized material, but surprisingly well-written. Willingham began to question the authorship and authenticity of the paper. Willingham suspected that another tutor within the department had crafted the paper. When Willingham reported her suspicions, her accusations were discounted and subsequently dismissed again.

By 2009, Willingham was nearing completion of a Master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). As part of her graduate program

requirements, she completed a thesis entitled “Academics & Athletics- A Clash of Cultures: Division I Football Programs.” Her experience working with student athletes in the academic support program was channeled into a highly critical account of the role of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in academics and revenue generating sports.

In the fall of 2009, basketball players discontinued enrollment in the no-show courses due to the assignment of a new academic advisor unwilling to participate in the practice. Registration in the “paper classes” (Kane, 2012, p. 2) continued for football players. After the second term paper incident coupled with knowledge of special admission practices for certain athletes, Willingham began to pursue other positions within UNC outside the ASPA. By the beginning of 2010, Willingham secured a different position in the learning center working with non-athletes. An investigation by the NCAA in 2012 confirmed earlier suspicions that student papers authored by ASPA tutors were indeed true. One of the confirmed instances involved the same football player Willingham had reported in 2008.

UNC System President Bill Friday passed away on October 12, 2012. President Friday was well-respected throughout the UNC system. He was known for his skepticism and criticism of revenue-generating college sports. Willingham admired President Friday for his strong stance toward academic rigor and lack of support for profitable college athletics. After attending President Friday’s funeral, Willingham was convicted to come forward with her insider story. She was convinced she could no longer stay silent about the questionable academic tactics behind maintaining player eligibility. Willingham decided she must go public about the common, deliberate advisement steering practices and lack of academic substance in the related courses. Other employees were aware of the routine procedures related to student athletes, but chose not to come forward.



On November 17, 2012, one of the local area newspapers, *The News and Observer*, first reported Willingham's insider account of the inner workings of the UNC academic support services for university athletes. During Willingham's tenure in the academic support program, she encountered many athletes, most of which were eager to succeed both on and off the field, inside and outside the classroom. Willingham blames a corrupt system of athletics over academics for the unfortunate plight of student athletes at UNC and other NCAA schools.

### **The African/Afro-American Studies Department and its Chair, Julius Nyang'oro**

**The Black Student Movement and the creation of the African/Afro-American Studies curriculum.** In 1968, the Black Student Movement was formed on campus at UNC as a result of civil rights protests. Since the origin of the Black Student Movement, there were calls for a building dedicated to the study and celebration of Black culture on campus. In the wake of the formation of the Black Student Movement came the development of the African/Afro-American Studies curriculum.

In 1969, UNC joined the ranks of other universities nationwide that were developing similar programs of study following the Civil Rights era. Many other universities such as the University of California at Berkley, Cornell, Indiana, Ohio State, Yale, and Penn were widely known for their African/Afro-American Studies programs. UNC sought to not only be situated as a top university in their region, but also nationwide.

Later in the 1980s, pleas for the construction of a physical building gained momentum alongside the African/Afro-American Studies Department's urgent calls to establish the curriculum as a permanent department with stable leadership. The African/Afro-American Studies curriculum was "designed to redress regrettable intellectual imbalances in

the standard curriculum, to help attract more African American students to Chapel Hill, and to create a more welcoming and affirming environment for all students” (Smith & Willingham, 2015, p. 35).

By 1989, the program had the largest enrollment of any such program in the country under the leadership of Colin Palmer. The curriculum was taught primarily by faculty from other departments such as History and Political Science. Palmer accepted a position in the History Department in 1986, but remained part-time chair of the African/Afro-American Studies Department. During this period, there was a series of multiple acting chairs following Palmer and three years of failed national searches for a permanent department chair. In 1990, future hope for the department came with the appointment of Trudier Harris, an African American literature scholar from the university’s English department, as department chair. The struggle for permanent department leadership combined with the lack of permanent or tenure track faculty within the curriculum led to unrest within the department. In addition, the majority of classes within the area were taught by graduate students, adjunct faculty, and affiliate faculty. The construction of a Black Cultural Center was hoped to “boost the visibility of the curriculum and help to attract the brightest minds to Chapel Hill” (Smith & Willingham, 2015, p. 38). The continued struggles of the department were a clear indication that the university did not make the African/Afro-American Studies department a university priority. By September of 1992, student protests took form as campus marches demanding a separate building to house the African/Afro-American Studies Department and to serve as the cultural center on campus. UNC athletes joined the cause by participating in marches and vocalizing their support of the cause. The Chancellor thought the building could become a symbol of segregation rather than a celebration of culture.

**The appointment of Julius Nyang'oro.** Nyang'oro started at UNC as a postdoctoral fellow in 1984 and continued as a faculty member teaching courses primarily related to his native region of East Africa through 1990. During his time as a postdoctoral fellow at UNC, Nyang'oro tutored football players within the Academic Support Program for Athletes (ASPA) to supplement his income. His early experiences with academics and athletics built a loyal foundation for his later schemes with academics and athletics. After being offered a tenure-track position at another university, UNC followed suit and offered Nyang'oro a tenure track position to entice him to stay at the university despite the absence of a real search for an alternative candidate. The search committee chair reminded the Dean that UNC had a poor track record for recruiting and retaining Black scholars, further contributing to Nyang'oro's swift appointment and attainment of tenure after only one year as assistant professor. Following the death of one veteran department faculty members and the departure of the other, Nyang'oro found himself in a unique position as the sole remaining Black faculty member in the department. Although other faculty members held seniority in the department, university administration feared the repercussions of white leadership in the African/Afro-American Studies curriculum. Thus, Nyang'oro soared from visiting faculty member to tenured professor to department chair in less than three years.

**The development of the paper class system.** The paper class system was a series of courses within the African/Afro-American Studies Department which required a single term paper and no actual class sessions. Students enrolled in the paper courses were disproportionately athletes and non-African/Afro-American Studies majors. Students enrolled in senior level courses as freshmen further demonstrated inconsistencies in pre-requisite and entrance requirements for the courses within the department.

## **Student Athletes**

Like many other institutions with big-time sports programs, UNC makes a habit of admitting academically underprepared athletes under a special admissions clause for special talent cases. Under the special admissions clause for athletes possessing special talents, athletes are evaluated by a special faculty committee to determine their potential for academic success at the institution. Coaches also have the opportunity to make a case for the athlete's admission to the institution. Numerous star athletes at UNC have been admitted under this special clause including: Michael McAdoo, Marvin Austin, and Julius Peppers.

**Michael McAdoo.** As a highly sought-after football recruit, McAdoo's high school experience, like many other players, left him ill-prepared for college-level coursework. McAdoo needed "special clearance" (Smith & Willingham, 2015, p. 243) to gain admittance to UNC. Unsurprisingly, McAdoo received his "special clearance" (Smith & Willingham, 2015, p. 243) admission to UNC in 2008, which also came with other special treatments such as having a pre-selected major (African/Afro-American Studies), hand-picked course schedules, access to specific professors, and an assigned tutor to assist with academic coursework.

***The suspension of McAdoo.*** The countermeasures taken to cover over McAdoo's academic shortcomings and ensure his eligibility came to light, when he was suspended from the football team along with twelve other players for suspicion of engaging in contracts with sports agents and receiving improper financial benefits. Although McAdoo was suspended for other reasons (non-academic), the NCAA's investigation into the athletes' improprieties uncovered email communications between athletes and tutors within the Academic Support Program for Athletes (ASPA). The communications revealed concrete evidence of the extent

of academic assistance provided to athletes by academic specialists. Communication between athletes and tutors documented the completion of academic assignments for athletes by tutors and also provided a glimpse of the bigger academic schemes within the African/Afro-American Studies Department. The probe centered on a paper submitted by McAdoo (mostly plagiarized) for a senior-level Swahili language course. The enrollment of an academically struggling freshman student in an advanced foreign language course should have also provided clues to the questionable academic advisement practices for athletes. The Swahili course was intended to fulfill the university's foreign language requirement, but ironically, the single paper submitted to fulfill the course requirement contained no usage of the Swahili language and was written in English.

***The Honor Court proceedings.*** Next, McAdoo's case was strategically sent to the UNC Honor Court. The submission of McAdoo's case to the Honor Court was not without purpose. All proceedings in the Honor Court were strictly confidential and held behind closed doors. Additionally, the Honor Court was comprised of only undergraduate students; no faculty or administrators were included. Decisions of the Honor Court were binding as it possessed full authority to issue verdicts relevant to cases questioning the academic integrity of students. Having the case heard before the Honor Court enabled UNC to conceal the more widespread academic fraud under the surface. Suspiciously absent from the Honor Court proceedings was the professor of record for the course. An anomaly in the course records was unable to determine the instructor of record, yet, someone had recorded grades for the course. Perhaps this anomaly and absence of an instructor was no coincidence, but another attempt to hide the depth of the academic fraud within the university. Professors were typically the originators of cases heard by the Honor Court. In the case of McAdoo, his case was sent to

the Honor Court on the insistence of the university based on the NCAA investigation. The Honor Court ruled against McAdoo resulting in a failing grade for the paper and the course, thus, validating its objectivity and strict adherence to academic integrity.

***McAdoo's permanent ban.*** Subsequently, McAdoo was permanently banned by the NCAA from all athletic competition at UNC and all other NCAA institutions in October 2010. The tutor (Jennifer Wiley) who assisted McAdoo was also dismissed from UNC in 2009 prior to McAdoo's ban and was told to stay away from athletes due to her close relationships to athletes. Later, in an attempt to be reinstated to the football squad, McAdoo brought suit against UNC and the NCAA claiming too harsh a punishment for an innocent single academic violation. In a statement handcrafted with the rhetoric of the university's athletic machine, McAdoo stated, "This has been a huge learning experience for me. All I want to be is a successful student ... [and] continue on the path to earn a degree from this great university" (Smith & Willingham, 2015, p. 255). The statement released by McAdoo strangely left out his desire to rejoin the football team and emphasized his desire to rejoin the student body. As noted by Smith and Willingham (2015), "In emphasizing the player's studiousness and naiveté, the UNC people simply carried out the masquerade they were obliged to perform" (p. 257).

**Marvin Austin.** At UNC, there was a repeating pattern of special favors for recruited star athletes. For example, Marvin Austin, the first star football recruit of Coach Butch Davis, was enrolled in English 100- Basic Writing in 2007. Frequent absences due to team practices and games had impeded his performance in this fundamental course. Rather than endanger his player eligibility with a failing grade in the course, Austin was approved for a special mid-point course transfer to another course. This other course was not an alternate section of

the same course that better aligned with Austin's football schedule, but an advanced 400-level course in the African/Afro-American Studies department. This mid-semester course transfer should have raised a red flag as to why a freshman enrolled in Basic Writing with a failing average would be transferred to an advanced level course in the African/Afro-American Studies department. This course was not only a senior-level course, but also an infamous paper course, which had no attendance and assignment requirements beyond the submission of a single paper at the end of the semester. Austin received a B+ in AFAM 428, thus safeguarding his freshman year player eligibility.

**Julius Peppers.** Austin was not the only star athlete receiving special treatment at UNC; Julius Peppers, a dual-sport athlete (basketball and football), was also in need of special treatment after an academically disappointing freshman performance. Playing both basketball and football gave Peppers an extra special advantage with two academic counselors working to ensure his continued player eligibility. At the end of his freshman year, Peppers had a concerning 1.45 GPA. He needed a minimum GPA of 1.5 to secure his sophomore year player eligibility. Peppers's academic needs called for his participation in what has been termed the summer "eligibility games" (Smith & Willingham, 2015, p. 358). In the summer following his freshman year, Peppers enrolled in two unusual courses for a rising sophomore with a minimal GPA, an independent study course in African/Afro-American Studies and French Theater in Translation. Both courses had the reputation for being athlete-friendly and unsurprisingly, he received B's in both courses. His enrollment in the summer "eligibility games" proved successful as he emerged from the summer courses with a GPA of 1.73, safely above the 1.5 minimum requirement. The "eligibility games" of the summer carried over into the fall and spring semesters for Peppers. After another

academically underwhelming fall semester in his sophomore year, eleven of the next seventeen courses on Peppers's transcript came from the African/Afro-American Studies department. The majority of these courses would later be classified as "paper courses," which required no attendance and the submission of a superficial research paper at the end of the course. Peppers earned a shocking 3.23 GPA in the African/Afro-American Studies courses, while maintaining a 1.16 GPA in courses outside the department. The 1.16 GPA more closely matched Peppers's academic performance prior to his participation in the "eligibility games." During his three years at UNC, Peppers managed to avoid the basic math requirement, the science with lab requirement, and the second year of foreign language. During Peppers's tenure at UNC, he lived life on the "eligibility bubble" (Smith & Willingham, 2015, p. 117) up until his final semester. He followed in the footsteps of other athletes before him and failed every single course his last semester at UNC, the only semester his GPA would not matter for player eligibility the following year.

### **Rationale for the Realist Tale**

The purpose of presenting the preceding realist tale is to provide readers with an opportunity to reference key aspects and details of the UNC scandal separate from the information provided in the following conceptual tales. This realist tale mirrors the conceptual tales only by the way it focuses on the same three main features of the scandal: 1) Mary Willingham, 2) the African/Afro-American Studies Department and its Chair, Julius Nyang'oro, and 3) student athletes. Also, I present this realist tale to set the stage for how poststructural theories can help disrupt the standard journalistic presentation of stories about collegiate athletics. Realist tales represent a neutral account of a story by a nameless narrator, whereas in the following conceptual tales, *I* analyze aspects of the recent UNC scandal using



theoretical concepts with an aim to critique the current state of collegiate athletics by problematizing the easy acceptance of athletics in higher education.

## Chapter 6: A Tale of Marginality: “A Word to Name the Margin”

*“What need does it satisfy? It gives a proper name to a generalized margin. A word to name the margin.”*

*(Spivak, 1993, p. 60-61)*

What does collegiate athletics do? When I reflect on the overarching question of my study, I remember how Spivak’s (1993) concept of the machine first led me to a new way of viewing collegiate athletics as the athletic machine. Spivak (1993) positions the university as the teaching machine by describing how it normalizes American education as the status quo (i.e., the way it is) and I similarly regard collegiate athletics as the athletic machine as it operates to secure the presence of athletics in higher education as the norm (i.e., just the way it is). As I contemplate how individuals are marginalized within the field of collegiate athletics, I come back to the opening quote by Spivak (1993) to question “what need is satisfied” by the marginalizing maneuvers of the athletic machine. Thus, in my thinking with Spivak (1993) about collegiate athletics, I consider how collegiate athletics may come undone. By *undone*, I present the possibility that collegiate athletics may be *done* in a new and different way through a resistance of the easy acceptance of athletics in higher education. To optimistically work toward a potential *undoing* of the way collegiate athletics is currently *done*, I explore how Spivak’s (1993) concepts of the machine and marginality may aid in this aspiration. In this first analytical tale, I employ textual resources from the recent UNC scandal as the foundation for my study. Events from the recent UNC scandal help establish the “what” collegiate athletics is *doing*, so I may move beyond the “what” to open up “how” and “why” collegiate athletics is *doing* what it does.

I have created two specific analytical questions to address the overarching question of my study: What does collegiate athletics do? The analytic questions prompted by thinking with Spivak (1993) are:

- How can the viewing of big-time sports programs as the athletic machine disrupt the acceptance of athletics in higher education?
- How can the concept of marginality be used to see how individuals are *outside in* the athletic machine?

These analytical questions are designed to help me take Spivak's (1993) theoretical concepts of the machine and marginality and see how they can help me think differently about the UNC scandal. I take up Spivak's (1993) concepts of the machine and marginality to think about how individuals, especially student athletes, are marginalized and conditioned by the athletic machine's desire to perpetuate athletic popularity and maximize monetary success. I view this as a collaboration between theorist and researcher as if Spivak (1993) was walking beside me as I navigate this analytical process.

### **Collegiate Athletics as the Athletic Machine**

An exposure to the philosophical concepts of Spivak has caused me to contemplate the current state of collegiate athletics in America and look for ways that it may come *undone*. Based on my reading of literature (Benedict & Keteyian, 2013; Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011; Feldman, 2007; Harrison, 2000; Lewis, 2010; Nixon, 2014; Rhoden, 2006; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010) and exposure to media coverage of collegiate sports, I now consider collegiate athletics a destructive addition to the realm of higher education. I assert that is not only necessary, but pressing to turn a critical eye toward the current existence of collegiate athletics as commonplace. Questioning the assumption that athletics within higher

education is an essential part of the core mission of higher education institutions is a means to interrogate the presence of athletics in higher education as just the way it is or the status quo. By not complacently accepting the co-existence of academics and athletics in higher education, I can find ways to *undo* the ways collegiate athletics is presently *done*. I come back to the big question of my project, “What does collegiate athletics do?” In essence, athletics promotes the names of colleges and universities in a shrewd moneymaking operation. To extend the opening quote by Spivak (1993) which questions what need is satisfied by the naming of the marginal, I similarly see what collegiate athletics is *doing* to “satisfy the need” for monetary gain, while operating under the ruse of providing a world-class college education. Many collegiate athletes learn more about how to play the game of high stakes collegiate sports than what is in a textbook or inside the classroom walls. Collegiate athletes quickly *learn* their purpose at the institution and how to satisfy the needs of the athletic machine—stay eligible, play the game, win, bring in the fans and revenue, hope to get noticed by the professional sports teams, and don’t get hurt. If athletes are not eligible and able to play, they quickly lose their value and do not matter<sup>8</sup> in the same ways to the university.

In this *undoing* of collegiate athletics, I hope that I may “accustom [myself] to starting from a particular situation and then to the ground shifting under [my] feet” (Spivak, 1993, p. 58). By identifying individuals as student athletes, I can be an accomplice to the crime of labeling and grouping individuals based on membership in a specific group such as gender, race, or religion. As a teacher, parent, and student, I “hope to work...toward controlling the dangers by making them visible” (Spivak, 1993, p. 60) and show that the culture of collegiate

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<sup>8</sup> The mattering of student athletes is discussed in detail in “Chapter 7: A Tale of Mattering.”

athletics is indeed a dangerous one for higher education as a whole as well as the individuals who reside inside its walls and populate its perimeters.

Knowledge of Spivak's (1993) concepts of the machine and marginality aid me in my role of cultural critic and help me to analyze how collegiate athletics operates like a well-oiled machine shaping individuals to its precise specifications toward goals of profit and victory. As discussed earlier in the introduction to this dissertation (see pp. 2-3), I borrow from Spivak's (1993) concept of the teaching machine by describing big-time sports programs at colleges and universities as the athletic machine. Big-time sports programs are also known as the profit sports which consist primarily of men's football and basketball. During the course of this analysis, I associate big-time sports programs with these two aforementioned sports. The athletic machine, marked by controlling tentacles that are intertwined into all areas of higher education, controls through its regulative authority to normalize the presence of athletics in higher education and to conform individuals to precise expectations and desired ways of being. The characterization of collegiate athletics as the athletic machine serves as the foundation for this analysis through a disturbance of both the uncritical acceptance and privileging of athletics (big-time sports programs) inside higher education.

### **Marginality and the Athletic Machine**

To recall, the idea of the athletic machine is borrowed from Spivak's (1993) concept of the teaching machine, which is described as the way Eurocentrically designed colleges and universities are characterized as the model of how higher education should be or as the norm. In my writing of this first post-tale shaped by Spivak's (1993) concepts of the machine and marginality, I focus on three events: 1) Willingham's act of whistleblowing, 2) the rise and

fall of the African/Afro-American Studies Department, and 3) the construction of student athletes. To address my first analytical question, I use Spivak's (1993) concept of marginality to show how Willingham, the African/Afro-American Studies Department, and student athletes are all *outside in* the athletic machine of the university. By *outside in*, I am stating how individuals reside in a structure such as the athletic machine within the university yet oppose its policies and practices.

I am not attempting to attach a fixed identity or label as *Other* or *marginal* to Willingham, the African/Afro-American Studies Department or the student athletes, but instead trying to show how the university's athletic machine is complicit in this attempted identification process. By *Other*, I reference the practice of sorting and setting apart individuals as different or unacceptable from the norm of the status quo. Through this sifting of individuals through the molds of normality, these individuals left behind as those unfit for society's molds of expectations can often remain on the fringes or margins of society. The *marginal* are those *Others* left behind or discarded by society and can also be labeled as bodies that do not matter or do not matter in the same ways as others<sup>9</sup>. For example, television broadcasts, floods of athletic merchandise and memorabilia, ticket sales, Internet and social media blasts all feed the beast known as the athletic machine. The athletic machine's power increases by swallowing up those who stand in its way. As Spivak (1993) writes, "Let us, then, for a moment at least, arrest the understandable need to fix and diagnose the identity of the most deserving marginal" (p. 61) and so instead of a quick classification of individuals as marginalized, I similarly propose to look to a diagnosis of how society enables the operations of structures such as the university athletic machine. I

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<sup>9</sup> The ways that some bodies matter more than others is discussed in detail in the following section, Chapter 7: A Tale of Mattering: "How Bodies Come to Matter."

choose to focus on the structure of the university athletic machine as it is the mastermind behind the dastardly deeds which marginalize and exploit individuals to accomplish its goals of profit and success at any cost. I look at the marginalization of individuals as the result of the operations of the athletic machine.

In this analysis, I take three aspects from the recent UNC scandal as illustrations of what collegiate athletics is *doing*. By looking at what collegiate athletics is currently *doing* and reflecting on the opening quote by Spivak (1993), I see what collegiate athletics is *doing* to “satisfy the need” for the accumulation of profits and victories. I open with Willingham’s act of whistleblowing as it is her story which first sparked the fire and controversy of the UNC scandal<sup>10</sup>. Willingham served as an academic tutor for athletes and students for close to ten years before going public about the abusive and manipulative academic practices favoring student athletes in an effort to maintain the eligibility of star athletes. I subsequently discuss the African/Afro-American Studies Department’s role in creating an intricate network of bogus courses with pre-determined outcomes (inflated grades) deliberately designed to ensure player eligibility. Ultimately, I focus on the student athletes who are at the core of the scandal and who are often the most exploited by the university’s desire for notoriety, athletic supremacy, and infinitely increasing revenue streams. By examining these three episodes and seeing the way collegiate athletics is currently done, I look for ways that collegiate athletics could come *undone* toward a *re-doing*, ways of *doing* collegiate athletics differently.

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<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed account of the events of the UNC scandal, please reference “Chapter 5: A Realist Tale: The Scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.”

## The Marginalization of Mary Willingham

I start with Willingham's experiences in the Academic Support Program for Athletes (ASPA) to address the first analytical question of my study:

- How can the concept of marginality be used to see how individuals are outside in the athletic machine?

Spivak's (1993) concept of marginality helps me to see the knotty nature of Willingham's act of whistleblowing about the abusive academic practices for student athletes at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). Willingham's decisive act of going public about the inner workings of the academic support program for athletes is knotty as it unravels an intricate tapestry woven to display the beauty of an elite university steeped in tradition, while disguising the deceptive backstage maneuvers to maintain the university's athletic supremacy.

Spivak's (1993) concept of marginality shows how Willingham is both *outside* looking in and *inside* looking out of the university's athletic machine. To have this dual existence within a structure such as the university is to live and function *inside* the structure while also being *outside* by opposing the policies, procedures, and actions of the university's structure: in this case, the athletic machine. The *outside* is defined as the individuals who stand in opposition of certain university practices. These individuals are part of a group, but not the *in* group, those who do not fall in line with the university's motto: protect the university at all costs. Deeply entrenched in the history of the university is its traditions. Traditions come with deeply seeded loyalties which force up a hedge of protection against anyone or anything (any force) which can threaten the university, its reputation, its bank balance, or its future existence. This bloodline of loyalty runs through the veins of generation



to generation almost like an animalistic instinct of self-preservation. This current way of *doing* collegiate athletics includes the ways the university draws from the forces of individuals who protect its identity as an untouchable entity. Coaches and administrators join together to form a shield of illusions presenting the image of the content, successful academic posing as a stellar athlete.

Willingham develops an intimacy with the inner-workings of the university as a successful professional with nearly a decade of service to the university, while also completing a graduate degree at a nearby state university; yet, she actively critiques the structure of the university administration which continues to tolerate and turn a blind eye to questionable academic practices involving student athletes. Willingham cannot not want to maintain her employment and livelihood with the university; yet, she is thrust to the *outside* by her condemnation of the questionable academic practices within the athletic academic support center. In this case, the *outside* represents an ostracization by the university's inside—both the athletic and academic departments. Willingham is neither accepted by the athletic nor the academic departments; therefore, she is *outside* the fold of the university. She is working *inside* the university walls, but she is not claimed by either academics or athletics. The university divorces Willingham and casts her aside as a traitor. Willingham needs to maintain the income derived from her employment at the university, yet she is conflicted by her disagreement with the university's corrupt academic practices surrounding student athletes. The immorality of the unfair treatment of athletes over ordinary students and the marginalization of athletes' academic competencies and the magnification of the athletic talents takes a toll on her conscience.

Once Willingham goes public about the paper class system and other questionable academic practices to maintain player eligibility, she is labeled whistleblower, informer, liar, tattletale, traitor, and Other. As she continues to inhabit the university (still employed by UNC), her lack of *one-of-us-ness* throws her to the sidelines, the margin. Her continued claim to *one-of-us-ness* is refused by those comprising the center, the *us*. Despite Willingham's incrimination of the university, she maintains her allegiance to the university with naïve hopes of improving the academic practices involving athletes. Willingham did not realize the range of knowledge about the academic practices for athletes within the academy and how the academy had compromised academic standards and would continue to protect the university's reputation and status at any and all costs. Willingham had hoped her revelation would result in an embrace by the academic community and the university administration. What Willingham found was alienation by both academics and athletics. Neither area chose to claim her as *one-of-us*. Whistleblowing pushes Willingham to the center through multiple media accounts and attention while the University demotes her in an attempt to push her and the discourse of the academic scandal to the margin. Willingham makes her way back to the center by filing a lawsuit against the University claiming retaliation for going public. The University settles quietly with Willingham out of court in an effort to once again quell the issue and rhetoric surrounding the academic scandal. Willingham once again drives the conversation toward the center by releasing a book about the scandal entitled *Cheated* (2015) co-authored by Smith, a current tenured UNC History professor. Ironically, Willingham still claims the label *Tarheel* stating her allegiance to Carolina despite her informant and advocacy efforts against the university's fraudulent academic practices with student athletes.

## **Institutional Patriarchy**

As I continue to explore how Willingham is marginalized by the workings of the athletic machine, I must question why the exposé account of the UNC scandal appeared in the form of a book with a co-author. The voice of the whistleblower could not be heard or trusted as Willingham's story needed the validating stamp of Smith's authenticity inside the university. A male insider voice was considered more valid or believable than that of a female outsider. Unsurprisingly, the male voice is privileged by a system plagued by the dominant patriarchy present in higher education as well as UNC. Although Smith was also an active participant in the interrogation of the deceitful academic practices benefiting the athletic programs, he did not relinquish his place in the university protected by the academic hedges of tenure. Smith was allowed to critique the system without risk. The patriarchal institutional structure tolerates critique by a tenured male History professor (Smith, co-author of *Cheated*), while Willingham as a female academic tutor is quickly cast aside. Smith is allowed to criticize the structure and roam in and out of its boundaries without fear of retaliation. Collegiate athletics exists as a male dominated field (coaches, athletic directors, trainers, athletes) and is another example of what collegiate athletics is *doing* to privilege the male presence within both athletics and academics. Spivak's (1993) concept of marginality helps to see how individuals are *outside in* the athletic machine as Smith is allowed to stand both inside and outside the machine, while Willingham is ultimately only permitted to reside in the outside.

## **Academics vs. Athletics**

To further show how Willingham is *outside in* the athletic machine (big money college sports programs), she is pressed toward the margin by university administration,

athletic staff, and some faculty members as she is re-minded of her role as academic support staff, not part of the *real* academy. The real academy is considered to be comprised of *real* academics (faculty, Deans, Provosts). In turn, she is compelled toward the center as the athletic machine requires her services and needs her to continue the churning out of eligible athletes. Not only is Willingham *outside in* the university and the athletic machine, but also she is between or *outside in* both worlds. She is not a *real* part of the academy as she is an academic support staff position. She is also not part of the *real* Athletic Department of the university as she is not an athlete, a trainer, or a coach. She is only needed by academics and athletics because both departments need to satisfy the other. The Athletic Department is required to demonstrate academic performance to satisfy the university administration and the NCAA. The academy needs to show the academic performance of athletes to rationalize the existence of athletic programs as only secondary to the presumed primary focus of academics. If the university can demonstrate that athletes perform well academically, then the university can further advance the concept of the student athlete as student first and athlete second. In the absence of academic eligibility requirements for athletes, the intense ratio of academic support personnel for athletes would not be required. The strict academic eligibility requirements necessary for student athletes would not be necessary if student athletes are truly students first and athletes second. Similarly, a special comprehensive academic support center for student athletes would also not be required. Moreover, if academic support personnel were devoted to all minds or bodies at the same ratio in the student body, the personnel costs could not be justified as it is in collegiate athletics and is yet another example of what collegiate athletics is *doing* to satisfy the need for athletic supremacy at the cost of the marginalization of athletes through the withholding of education.

Collegiate athletics gets “done” by allowing the magnitude of revenues and expenditures generated from big-time sports programs and the big-stakes environment to depend on continued player eligibility.

Willingham’s experience as a tutor within the academic support program for athletes illustrates the athletic machine’s tendency to dismiss and discard individuals once their value has been depleted. Once Willingham exposes the inner workings of the athletic machine’s covert operations to privilege athletics over academics, the athletic machine *undoes* Willingham as an insider, a Tarheel, and one-of-us and overhauls her as not only an outsider, but ostracizes her from the university. To return to the frame of *outside in*, Willingham works *inside* the university’s structure while maneuvering *outside* the university’s protective boundaries by speaking out about the questionable academic practices to maintain player eligibility. Willingham uncovered that academic advisors and administrators with the academic support program did not act alone when designing eligibility proof course schedules for athletes. This successful blueprint required collusion from other areas and departments across the university; for example, pivotal to the construction of eligible athletes was the independent study courses offered by Julius Nyang’oro, Chair of the African/Afro-American Studies Department.

Spivak’s (1993) concept of marginality shows how individuals such as Willingham can be both *inside* a structure such as the ASPA, yet, also be *outside* the same structure through disagreement with the dishonest schemes designed to maintain player eligibility. The second aspect of the UNC scandal explored in my study, the African/Afro-American Studies Department, further helps me address the analytical question of:

- How can the concept of marginality be used to see how individuals are *outside in* the athletic machine?

The athletic machine acts as an astute architect by assembling parts such as academic departments fashioned with distinct objectives in mind. The African/Afro-American Studies Department is one such precise model, handcrafted by the athletic machine as the scandal at UNC was rooted in this academic department. The African/Afro-American Studies Department was formed in the margins of the university making it particularly susceptible to its staging as an academic house of cards.

### **The Rise and Fall of the African/Afro-American Studies Department**

I turn now to the functioning of the African/Afro-American Studies Department to continue an analytic engagement with the question: How can the concept of marginality be used to see how individuals are *outside in* the athletic machine? The African/Afro-American Studies Department represented the epicenter of the UNC scandal as the chief engineer of the infamous “paper class system.” The paper class system was a series of courses within the African/Afro-American Studies Department which required a single term paper and no actual class sessions. Students enrolled in the “paper courses” were disproportionately athletes and non-African/Afro-American Studies majors. Students enrolled in senior level courses as freshman further demonstrated inconsistencies in pre-requisite and entrance requirements for the courses within the department. The pre-requisite to many of these courses was not previous coursework in the department, but membership on an athletic team.

In the background, there was also the expeditious appointment of an inexperienced Department Chair (Nyang’oro) with a passion for the university’s basketball team coupled with momentum building toward the establishment of a new physical building to serve as a

the Center for African/Afro-American Studies at the university (Smith & Willingham, 2015)<sup>11</sup>. Nyang'oro's appointment followed the convergence of numerous events—the resignation of the Department Chair, an extended vacancy of a permanent replacement, interim appointments, and failed personnel searches (Smith & Willingham, 2015).

### **The Development of the Paper Class System**

As the UNC scandal unveils the longevity of the paper class system *centered* in the African/Afro-American Studies Department, the athletic machine *re-makes* the Department as *Other*, the margin. The African/Afro-American Studies Department is pressed toward the center by marking it as an official academic department at the university. The African/Afro-American Studies Department is further centered by the construction of a physical building serving as the home for the related faculty and courses. The building also served as a cultural center for the campus Black Student Movement, thus fulfilling Spivak's (1993) claim that “the center wants an identifiable margin” (p. 60). The African/Afro-American Studies Department, a department formed in the margins (fringes) of the university is pushed to the center of the university due to pressure from faculty, students, alumni, and the Black Student Movement to devote resources to the department.

The uncovering of the paper class system legitimizes the athletic machine's pushing of the Department Chair and secretary to the sidelines, to that which *should* stay marginal. The Department Chair, Nyang'oro, and secretary, Debbie Crowder, are both forced out of the university after both are discovered as central to the development and implementation of the paper class system. The athletic machine only values the Department while it helps churn out academically eligible athletes. When the Department can no longer perform its function or

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<sup>11</sup> To understand how the Department of African/Afro-American Studies was formed, its history is presented in “Chapter 5: A Realist Tale: The Scandal at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.”

role on the player eligibility assembly line, it becomes de-valued and marginal. The Department and its Chair become the malefactors as they are trapped and hung up in the athletic machine only to get *spit out* as machine rejects and seconds unfit for the elite athletic machine. The “economic principle of identification through separation” (Spivak, 1993, p. 61) also gets at the heart of the athletic machine’s operations turning out revenue-generating athletes. The athletic machine separates and sorts those who support its objectives to sustain and enhance the success of the athletic programs and those that oppose them. The athletic machine endorses the champions of its cause and defeats the opponents of its mission to circumvent academic eligibility policies.

As I reflect on the events that led to the formation of the African/Afro-American Studies Department and the construction of the Black Cultural Center at UNC, I consider why the university created the Black Cultural Center and whether the university willingly constructed the Black Cultural Center with full knowledge that it would reap rewards from the harvest sowed inside the building and department. The building for the African/Afro-American Studies Department may have come with more than an actual price tag, but a higher cost through the compromise academic and moral standards. My analytical questions examine how an envisioning of collegiate athletics as a machine can disrupt the easy acceptance of academics and athletics in higher education and how Spivak’s (1993) concept of marginality exposes how individuals are both *outside in* the athletic machine. I presented the above considerations as a stimulus toward to a more profound analysis of the UNC scandal and collegiate athletics as a whole, and also as a way of addressing my overarching question to show what collegiate athletics is *doing* to function like a machine and marginalize individuals as a conduit to financial profit and athletic success.



## **A Department Formed in the Margins**

In the situation of the African/Afro-American Studies Department, what has been deemed as marginal and pushed aside through the delays to establish the significance and importance of the African/Afro-American Studies program, was thrust to the center through the construction of the new Black Cultural Center. Spivak (1993) wrote, “If there is a margin *in* a center, and a center *in* a margin, then each one constantly makes and re-makes the other [original emphasis]” (p. 45). As the African/Afro-American Studies Department enters the *center* of the University as an official academic department, it gives the illusion of centrality and status (value) of the discipline in academia and in this way, “marginality ... is coded in the currency of the equivalences of knowledge. That currency measures the magnitude of value in the sphere of knowledge” (Spivak, 1993, p. 69). The currency of knowledge propelling the African/Afro-American Studies Department forward is fueled by the donations and support of alumni and community members, many of which are also athletic boosters. Teamed with a disproportionate number of African American athletes over Caucasian athletes in the revenue generating sports programs alongside many student athletes suspiciously enrolled in numerous courses within the African/Afro-American Studies curriculum, the Department’s rise to the center represents the convergence of multiple interests. This disequilibrium of academia and athletic pursuits also unsettles the center of the university’s athletic machine. The machine works to *make* and *re-make* the African/Afro-American Studies Department by erecting a centralized building as a ruse for the magnitude of knowledge as significant and valuable. The athletic machine feeds the Department Chair’s obsession with UNC basketball and ensures his unwavering allegiance by offering him exclusive opportunities to act as guest coach for the team, private travel with the team to

away games, and courtside seats at home games (Smith & Willingham, 2015). The Department Chair was not alone in receiving bonuses for his production of eligible athletes; the Department secretary (Crowder), academic tutors, and other professors were also courted by the basketball team with fringe benefits for their eligibility efforts such as game tickets and team merchandise. How the athletic machine charges a high price for the ascension of the department within the academic realm of the university is an example of what collegiate athletics is *doing* to require the department to unite in partnership to contrive creative ways to maintain player eligibility, in exchange for the boosting and legitimization of the department. The *doings* of collegiate athletics lure the African/Afro-American Studies Department into the snares of “the athletic trap” (Nixon, 2014, p. 32) through an unholy alliance with the university’s athletic machine.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) assert that there is, “the valorization of marginality in universities, such that there is an over-zealous drive to locate, represent, and inhabit the margins” (p. 38). The African/Afro-American Studies Department struggles to survive in the academic jungle surrounded by well-established academic predators that are quick to pounce on the newly formed department and re-mind them that they are not one of original core academic disciplines. The department overcomes the legitimization war at the university and obtains both departmental status and a permanent structure to house the department. When the scandal is unveiled and the African/Afro-American Studies Department is at the heart of the academic wrongdoings, the university is quick to cut loose the Department Chair while also questioning the legitimacy of the discipline’s academic status, whether the department belongs as a separate academic department or as a part of another academic department. I am certain to bring another point to the forefront; while the personnel within the African/Afro-

American Studies Department (the Chair and secretary) were condemned by the university, the Athletic Department staff remained untouched and intact. The privileging of athletics over academics continues by the university's decision to punish academic faculty and staff as the operation's scapegoats despite the fact that athletic staff members were also knowledgeable about the athlete friendly practices of the African/Afro-American Studies Department. The Department is *in* when it serves the needs of the university and *out* when it is detrimental to the university's survival and unblemished reputation.

Simultaneously, the players are the athletic elite and the academic marginal. What irony exists that the so-called paper classes were rooted in the African/Afro-American Studies Department, a department formed in the margins? The University functions as a system which actively applauds athleticism; yet, marginalizes the academic intellectual abilities needed to acquire an education. As the curtain was pulled back to reveal what collegiate athletics *does* through the collusive efforts of the African/Afro-American Studies Department, other departments and professors also played supporting roles in the university's manipulative moves to keep players eligible for play. Numerous other courses had a reputation for eligibility friendly outcomes such as those within the Departments of Geography, Philosophy, and Radio, Television, and Motion Pictures. Often overlooked are the athletes that are the focus of these methodical eligibility efforts. To address one of my analytic aims and to disrupt the easy acceptance of athletics in higher education, I now examine how the athletic machine turns its wheels to marginalize student athletes and raise athletics to the spotlight.

## **The Construction of Student Athletes**

Spivak (1993) warned against “establishing marginality as a subject position” (p. 58). I also concur that assigning or labeling individuals or groups as marginal and placing individuals in the realm of marginality is problematic regarding emancipatory aims of subjecthood. It is also an attempt to reduce individuals to a singular or one-dimensional subject position. In line with poststructural thought, I see how the athletic machine works to diminish the value of the lives of individuals by not recognizing them as human beings, but as replaceable pieces of the machine.

In my categorization of student athletes as a group, I must caution myself about doing what Spivak (1993) called making “an universalist claim” (p. 58) about all student athletes. I recognize and acknowledge that all experiences of student athletes are not identical due to the heterogeneous nature of the characteristics which clearly define all people as human beings and distinct individuals. It is not my intent to minimize the individual personal experiences of student athletes by identifying the group as a marginalized population or by grouping all student athletes together as a singular group. My goal is to illuminate and bring forward how the athletic machine generates conditions that marginalize the lives of student athletes within higher education and the ways in which the athletic machine produces student athletes as subjects, more specifically racialized and gendered subjects.

Spivak (1993) referencing Said’s (1978) book, *Orientalism*, stated that his primary focus was not marginality or marginalization, but “the study of the construction of an object, for investigation and control” (p. 62). In the case of collegiate athletics, student athlete is a term specifically *constructed* to protect colleges and universities, as well as the NCAA, from any claims to benefits such as: the use of images, profits/revenues, insurance, worker’s

compensation, disability, or death benefits. For example, athletes who are injured while playing collegiate sports are not entitled to any benefits beyond personal insurance coverage. For athletes who are not seriously injured, this insurance coverage is sufficient. Athletes who are permanently injured to the point they will never return to the sport, personal insurance coverage can seem quite inadequate. In fact, in addition to their loss of athletic ability, athletes also face the loss of college scholarships. Many athletes are forced to leave college and never to return due to insufficient financial means to cover tuition without the aid of a full scholarship. Other athletes are much less fortunate when their injuries have fatal outcomes; unless athletes have life insurance policies (most young adults or college students do not), their families are left with nothing but heartache and loss. Athletes are not entitled to worker's compensation benefits of any kind as the NCAA has vehemently fought in court to uphold that colleges and athletes do not have an employer/employee relationship. The university benefits from the athletic performance of young athletes while athletes receive no benefits in return to protect themselves from the prospect of injury and death. The university risks little on athletes by offering them room, board, a seat in the classroom, and a spot on the team, while athletes risk life and limb for a chance to play collegiate and professional sports. Universities gain publicity and revenue generated by the performance and success of collegiate athletics. Thus, in this scenario, collegiate athletics is *doing* whatever is necessary to "satisfy its need" to achieve wins and championships at the cost of athletes' well-being.

The term student athlete is also designed to cleverly disguise the athlete as a student first and an athlete second. This *construction* of the term student athlete is an example of what collegiate athletics is *doing* to give the appearance of one thing (students playing athletics) while masking what collegiate athletics is not *doing* (athletes acting as students).

The use of the term student athlete is additionally a mechanism of control. The dual role of alleged student and athlete leads to ways to control individuals by playing one end against the other. Athletes' abilities to play on the field or court are controlled by their level of academic performance. Yet, the athlete's constant requirement for daily practice sessions, games, frequent out-of-state travel, and other time commitments inhibits the student from performing in the classroom. The constant push and pull or tug of war between academics and athletics shows what collegiate athletics is *doing* to create an intense environment of control, as students can be controlled both by threats from coaches and professors.

### **Exploitation of Student Athletes**

Many individuals, especially student athletes, are trapped in the churnings of the athletic machine as it lures them into its snares with the promise of a college education and athletic fame. Unfortunately, the university's athletic success and ascension amongst the collegiate sports elite powerhouses is prioritized over the accomplishments and plights of individuals. Athletes have a unique existence within the athletic machine as they are inside the system which holds them prisoner by their athletic ability and constrains them to a college career dominated by practices, commitments, and game schedules. While athletes may realize the guarantee of a complete college education is mere propaganda, they find themselves as a participant in a system (big-time sports programs) which they oppose. Athletes may hope to break through the sham of an eligibility education and earn an authentic college degree while also playing sports. Yet, collegiate athletes find themselves battling a system deeply embedded into colleges and universities nationwide which hold college athletes hostage with college scholarships. An eligibility education is an academic course of study specifically designed to ensure high grades to secure player eligibility. In

other words, an eligibility education is a series of easy courses with a reputation for high grades regardless of academic effort and performance, a *doing* of collegiate athletics that marginalizes student athletes by pulling them inside the sports arena and pushing them outside the classroom.

Belsey (2002) observed that “Ideology secures the system by consent” (p. 36). Only through “consent”[ing] to the system (school for play) do athletes “consent” (agree) to become athletes masked as students. Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) often “mask the element of exploitation involved in the fact that he has to sell his labour-power (he can’t afford not to)” (Belsey, 2002, p. 36). Borrowing from Spivak (1993), student athletes are indeed *Outside in the [Athletic] Machine*. Their desire to participate in athletics and attend a top elite university generates their silence about the academic advisement and classroom practices prevalent at many universities. While the athletic machine of the university labels them as *Other*, those who cannot rise to the university academic standards, the university pushes their athletic ability to the center of focus. The normalizing structure of the athletic machine creates a universal athlete who is not expected to have academic prowess, but athletic aptitude. The athletes cannot not want to climb the ladder toward the prosperity offered by the athletic machine, both social and financial. Borrowing from Jackson & Mazzei (2012), the athletes cannot not want “the upward mobility offered by the [athletic] machine. The [athletic] machine centers the marginal by giving status to an aspiring elite” (p. 45). The prospect of a future professional sports contract outweighs the promise of a college education. In essence, the athletic machine’s prizing of athleticism and monetary rewards re-inforces the pursuit of a professional sports career over what the athletic machine ranks as an-*other* career.

In the UNC scandal, the leaking of Julius Peppers's transcript provided concrete evidence of the academic advisement of athletes and what collegiate athletics is *doing* to maintain the academic eligibility of star athletes. Peppers's short academic career at UNC was marked by deliberate advisement moves to not only maintain, but obtain his player eligibility. Peppers's transcript revealed a series of courses that seem to appear on his schedule just in time to deliver the necessary grades needed to maintain eligibility. The courses also seem to follow no rational academic program of study or major further exposing how athletes are enrolled *in* courses that keep them on the court and field, while also keeping them *outside* the classroom. All of this is explained by the fact that Peppers was a highly sought after recruit gifted in both basketball and football. Peppers was admitted under a special admissions clause, which serves as an example of what collegiate athletics is *doing* to allow universities to admit students with insufficient college placement exam scores and GPAs. Students are admitted under this provisional status if they can demonstrate that tutoring and remediation will help them successfully perform at the college level.

Peppers stayed at UNC for only three years before declaring for the NFL draft. It is no coincidence that players are ineligible for the NFL draft until you are three years removed from high school or have attended three years in college. Peppers was admitted to UNC with one purpose in mind—to generate revenue for the Athletic Department and the university while waiting to enter the draft. Why does the NFL have waiting periods for entrance into the draft? One could argue kids need to mentally mature and grow physically prior to entering this tortuous sport or league, but one could also argue colleges and the NFL work together to oil the wheels of the athletic machine. By forcing players into three years of college football, not only improves players' skills levels, but also gains notoriety and recognition through



media coverage of college games. The fame and notoriety of college athletes fuels the momentum and anticipation of which team will select the player in the draft. Furthermore, this excitement grows to a fever pitch anticipating how the players will ultimately perform at the professional level. One hand feeds the other. In this quid pro quo arrangement of big-time sports, both sides benefit as the colleges serve as glorified training camps or grounds for professional sports. College courses and programs of study are treated like extra-curricular endeavors while the sports reigns supreme. UNC never intended to confer an academic degree to Peppers; instead, they intended to use him to garner publicity and revenue for the university.

Spivak (1993) referred to her personal identification as a Bengali by saying "the loss of that name in that place is not without certain irony" (p. 60). Spivak (1993) was referencing her experiences traveling from place to place and how she is identified differently depending on the location. In this specific example, she spoke of not being known as a Bengali while in London due to the British's association of Bengali as a concentration of "disenfranchised immigrant Bangladeshis" (Spivak, 1993, p. 60). While in America, Spivak is not known as Asian, although that is geographically accurate, she is known as Indian. Spivak (1993) also discussed the irony that exists in being called Indian while in American, considering the United States' history with Native Americans. To parallel Spivak's loss of her name above, student athletes also face an ironic naming in the place of the university. There is certainly a great deal of irony in the fact that the university names the individuals as student athletes. Moreover, the university adds the name student to the name athlete and as in traditional naming, one could say their first name is listed as student, but their last name or family name is athlete. First name: student; last name: athlete. One may be called by their first name, but

they will be known by their last name. Individuals are given the name student under the guise that the athletes are first admitted as students versus recruited and admitted as athletes. There is also additional “certain irony” (Spivak, 1993, p. 60) that the Athletic Department or the athletic machine consents to the naming of athletes as students—student athletes. Borrowing from Spivak's (1993) statement above to show what collegiate athletics is *doing* by naming athletes as student athletes, I assert that there is also “certain irony” in the addition of “that name” (student) in “that place” (the university's athletic machine) when referencing the term *student athlete*.

**A reversal of roles: Student athletes or athlete students.** Spivak (1993) reminded us that “every academic knows one cannot be without labels” (p. 55). This academic labeling also pertains to the athletic machine. The athletic machine generates revenue-producing athletes disguised as students. Yet, the athletic machine *labels* them as students, *student athletes*. The labeling of individuals as student athletes creates an illusion of an individual who is equally student and athlete or primarily a student while also being an athlete. This labeling resembles society's desire for social and economic stratification. Through labeling systems, universities are able to group and separate individuals according to their uses and purposes. In other words, universities fulfill their duty to prepare individuals for their respective roles in society. Universities admit many athletes without the intent to provide an education and a subsequent degree. Universities work as a pass-through agency to professional sports organizations. Universities also serve as a means to push back down individuals to their communities without the pledged college education and hope, when their dreams of sports careerism are not realized. The university pipeline only provides a narrow opening for a select few whose athletic talents transport them to the other side.

I interrogate the operations of the athletic machine by posing the following questions as it helps me push my thinking forward into new territory, beyond the boundaries of commonsense thinking and easy acceptance of athletics in higher education. Are student athletes admitted to colleges and universities with the intent and purpose of preparing them for a career related to their academic major? Or are they instead majoring in sports in preparation for a future in professional sports? Are they majoring in sports and minoring in academics? Why do universities admit students who do not meet academic criteria for normal admission? Why is there a clause for admittance of students with *special* talents who do not meet academic requirements? Is the *special* talent prized over academic acumen? My purpose in examining the how and why of the operations of the athletic machine is to expose what conditions enable its behavior and what is produced by its actions. As Spivak (1993) wrote, “What need does it satisfy?” (p. 55). Collegiate athletics “satisfies the need” of achieving athletic victory and financial gain: this is its *doing*. Smith and Willingham (2015) similarly observed that “The athletes thus defrauded come disproportionately from socioeconomically disadvantaged positions, and are also disproportionately African American. The beneficiaries of the business model that their labors propel ... are disproportionately wealthy and white” (p. 23). Thus, universities are using students (i.e., young athletes) to get athletic talent and convert it to material gain for the university. Universities have become complicit in “perpetuating social injustice, unfair hierarchies of power, and corrosive racial stereotypes” (Smith & Willingham, 2015, p. 23).

When we re-pair the words student and athlete to form the re-formed term—*athlete student*, we open up new ways of seeing the subject as constituted by the athletic machine. We also see new ways of becoming for the re-paired athlete student. We reveal the inside

trappings of the gears of the athletic machine churning in reverse. We re-start the athletic machine by shifting it into re-verse. Might the re-versing of the words athlete and student reverse the actions of the athletic machine to re-produce the subject as *student athlete*, not *athlete student*? Why do the same words sound so differently when reversed? Student athletes are supposed students first and athletes second. Spivak (1993) declared, “It gives a proper name to a generalized margin. A word to name the margin” (p. 60-61). The “it” is the classification of an individual as part of a group. Hegemonic societal structures such as the athletic machine of the university name the players as student athletes in a deliberate move to place them in the center, although artificially. The athletic machine acts as what Foucault (1980) called a “vehicle of power” (p. 98) creating an illusion of a center with no margin. Those within the margin are falsely *named* as part of the academy to create a false sense of belonging.

The naming of athletes as student athletes is another instance of what collegiate athletics is doing to make universities *feel good* about their arrangement with collegiate athletes. By calling athletes as students, universities utilize the utility of repetition. Repetition of the term student athlete works to create consolidation of the two binaric terms. By creating a name that combines two opposite terms such as student and athlete, “it can cover much unease” (Spivak, 1993, p. 60) and in so doing, the deliberate naming of athletes as students can help mask the complicity of universities in the marginalization and exploitation of student athletes.

I refer to student athletes as athlete students throughout the remainder of this section in a deliberate move to constantly disrupt the conditioning of a repeated use of the term student athlete which reinforces the idea of individuals as students first and athletes second.

By reversing the term student athletes as athlete students, I emphasize not only the possibility, but the probability that many individuals perform primarily as athletes while acting as students. Each time I write and name student athletes as athlete students, I re-write a new present and future for all student athletes, a choice to live as both student and athlete or only student or only athlete. As I attempt to re-write a changed present and future for athletics in higher education, I, myself, am re-minded of how ingrained the term student athlete is in my mind, my memory, my speech, and my writing. An *undoing* is a space of tension where we must constantly push against history and repetition toward a deliberately changed present and future. I am not only unraveling the past and current state of athletics in higher education, I am also coming *undone* in the process. My own *undoing* represents the possibilities for us all, including individuals caught up in the snares of the athletic machine.

### **Manufacturing Athletes**

The university profits on athletic labor while falling short of its promise for a college education. Does classroom equal play or does play equal classroom? The whole premise of the “no-show classes” removes the academic from the classroom, leaving administrators to adjust and award course grades, when necessary (when player eligibility is needed). The race of many athlete students has also labeled them as a need-to-pass-through population with a continued deprivation of educational opportunity and expectations. A refusal to foster the mind over the body results in marginality in its truest sense, an athletic labor contract. Athletes provide sacrificial labor for the university’s athletic machine. There is a valorization of physical ability over the intellectual development and capacity of the mind, the physical (rational) over mental (emotional). What is the athletic machine churning out? Educationally deprived individuals? A value of the body over the mind?

Spivak (1993) indicated marginalization is “an economical principle of identification through separation” (p. 61). The center (university administration, NCAA, coaches) is setting apart athlete students as students for purposes of denying royalties, rights to their images, and profits for the economic principle of profit margin. This setting apart of athletes as students additionally establishes a reason for the presence of big-time sports programs at colleges and universities (institutions of higher learning). The center wants to isolate the population (the margin) from true entrance into the real academy. The spotlight on collegiate athletic competitions (football and basketball games) creates a false façade of a center; yet the athlete students stay on the perimeter or sidelines of the classroom.

Within collegiate athletics, sports careerism is associated with business models of education as a manufacturing environment. Academic literature from the early twentieth century promotes the factory model through the use of the language of business to try to quantify the movements of children through school and the education system by statements such as “the relation of the finished product to the raw material” (Ayres, 1909, p. 176-177). Bagley (1907) furthered the conversation by declaring “the school resembles a factory in that its duty lies in turning a certain raw material into a certain desired product” (p. 4). In this case, the raw material is the student and the finished product is a student molded and fabricated to the exact specifications of the educational system. When applied to collegiate athletics, this idea conjures a vision of a manufacturing environment, an assembly line of sorts where young adults are processed, made, un-made, and re-made to fit the production needs of the university athletic machine. Yost (2010) affirmed that, “All these kids are is the raw material for a system that chews them up and spits them out the other end” (p. 336). Unfortunately, this “other end” (Yost, 2010, p. 336) is not typically an authentic college

education, but more often a manufactured one, an eligibility education. Many students do not successfully *pass* through the athletic machine to the other side of graduation, a professional sports career, or an-*other* career. In fact, “less than two percent of college athletes make it to the pros” (Yost, 2010, p. 15). Many are classified as damaged goods, spoilage, rejects, or *seconds* of sorts. Sadly, these kids are viewed as “a raw material that’s in endless supply” (Yost, 2010, p. 23). The athletic machine discards that which has no monetary value. Individuals are viewed as interchangeable puzzle pieces in the revenue machine, the money making process. The green fields resemble the color of the money that turns the wheels of the athletic machine. The only kind of matter that matters is that which is tainted with the hue of green or painted the color of money. The athletes only hold value to the college while they are helping to turn the wheels of the athletic moneymaking machine. Once the athletes lose their value, they are cast aside. Worse yet, they are considered replaceable, disposable, and expendable. Most importantly, they do not emerge as what Butler (1993) termed *Bodies that Matter*.

### **Conclusion: Moving Toward New Ways for Bodies to Matter**

This tale has highlighted three episodes in the recent UNC scandal, Willingham’s whistleblowing, the African/Afro-American Studies Department, and student athletes, as examples of how collegiate athletics operates like a machine and marginalizes individuals in its path for material gain. I began this tale by explaining how Spivak’s (1993) concept of the teaching machine could be repurposed in this study by envisioning collegiate athletics as the athletic machine. I continued by contemplating how Spivak’s (1993) concept of marginality helps see how individuals are both *outside in* the workings of the athletic machine. One of the key concerns that surfaced out of this particular theoretical analysis was the willingness

of individuals to compromise integrity to satisfy the athletic machine's need to obtain success and profit at any price. I have drawn attention to these abandonments of integrity to emphasize how colleges and universities exploit young athletes through a privileging of athletics over academics, and most critically, to give insight into what collegiate athletics *does* to decide how certain bodies come to matter more than others: the focus of the next tale.



## Chapter 7: A Tale of Mattering: “How Bodies Come to Matter”

*“To problematize the matter of bodies may entail an initial loss of epistemological certainty, but a loss of certainty is not the same as political nihilism. On the contrary, such a loss may well indicate a significant and promising shift in political thinking. This unsettling of ‘matter’ can be understood as initiating new possibilities, new ways for bodies to matter.”*

*(Butler, 1993, p. 30)*

What does collegiate athletics do? When I “think with” Butler about this overarching analytical question of this project, I contemplate how her concepts can produce a critique of collegiate athletics. How and why is collegiate athletics doing what it does? As I reflect with Butler (1993) about how certain bodies come to matter more than others, I wonder how collegiate athletics works to determine which bodies count as “valued and valuable ... in the world” (p. 22). Thus, in my thinking with Butler about collegiate athletics, I ponder how collegiate athletics might come *undone*. In a similar fashion to Butler’s (2004) description of becoming *undone* as an individual’s rejection of normalized ways of being in the world in favor of more expansive ways of being in the world, I use the term *undone* to indicate the prospect that the way something such as collegiate athletics has always been *done* can be *done* in a new and different way. In this hopeful *undoing* of the structure of collegiate athletics, I examine how Butler’s (1990/2006, 1993) concept of mattering might become productive toward this goal. As with the previous Tale of Marginality, I continue in this Tale of Mattering to take the recent UNC scandal where academic fraud was enlisted to secure player eligibility as the basis for my analytic endeavor. Textual resources from the recent UNC scandal provide illustrations of the “what” collegiate athletics is *doing*, and I extend the “what” to interrogate the “how” and “why” of its *doings*.

As I continue on this analytical journey by taking Butler (1990/2006, 1993) by my side to produce a second post-tale, I consider how her concept of mattering can be used to create an original approach to examine collegiate athletics, and more specifically the case at UNC. The analytical questions provoked by my thinking with Butler are:

- In the field of collegiate athletics, and more specifically in the UNC scandal, how do bodies emerge as those that matter—and why?
- How can the concept of mattering disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics?

I approach this analysis as a means to question the paradoxical existence of athletics within higher education. In so doing, I wish to unsettle institutional contentment with the way things are (the status quo) in the state of collegiate athletics with an aim toward establishing new ways of seeing academics and athletics in higher education.

### **The Concept of Mattering**

Using Butler's (1993) concept of what I call mattering, I trouble the field of collegiate athletics by asking: Which bodies emerge as those that matter—and why? Butler (1993) outlined mattering as “to know the significance of something is to know how and why it matters, where ‘to matter’ means at once ‘to materialize’ and ‘to mean’” (p. 32) and accordingly, I adapt mattering as the value placed on the lives of individuals. By troubling the ways in which some bodies become somebody whereas other bodies are viewed as no-body at all, I hope to create what Butler (1993) envisioned as “a radical rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as ‘life,’ lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving” (p. 16). That is, many student athletes, especially those of color, are marked as *other* or no-body within the walls of the university, but as some-body

while outside the university walls. In the frame of mattering, Butler (1993) described *other* as “those who do not matter in the same way” (p. xi). This practice of *other-ing* is widespread in higher education and sports. This viewing (and overlooking) of bodies can help us more deeply question how some bodies escape the caring gaze of mattering, while others matter greatly.

Although the focus of Butler’s work is primarily gender and sex, she does mention race and its applicability toward her concept of mattering in her significant theoretical works such as *Gender Trouble* (1990/2006), *Bodies That Matter* (1993), and *Undoing Gender* (2004). She also takes up the matter of race more explicitly in subsequent articles and interviews such as “Reading Rodney King: Reading Urban Uprising” (1993) and “What’s Wrong with ‘All Lives Matter’?” (Yancey & Butler, 2015). Important to note is that in all of her work, Butler does recognize the pivotal role of race in the constitution of subjects and the ways race marks bodies as those that matter and those that do not.

My analysis of collegiate athletics using Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering has led me to see how race plays a critical role in determining how and why bodies come to matter. The stark division of race in college sports with mostly Black athletes in the profit sports contrasted by predominantly White student bodies and leadership led me to explore how Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) may help support my thinking with Butler about the ways in which certain bodies matter more than others.

### **The Relevance of Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) serves as a collaborating theoretical position to this analysis. More specifically, I am interested in how Critical Race Theory intersects with performativity (Butler, 1990/2006) to produce Butler’s (1993) concept

of mattering. The tenets of Critical Race Theory are critical to an analysis of how race, sport, and higher education all converge in the form of collegiate athletics to determine how and why some bodies matter more than others. I put forward that the conceptual configuration point at which Critical Race Theory and Butler meet is with the concept of mattering, which could result in what Butler (1993) described as “a reconceptualization of which bodies matter, and which bodies are yet to emerge as critical matters of concern” (p. 4). The combination of Butler and CRT is necessary in this analysis to understand how historically established racial norms play into the valuation of lives and how those bodies come to matter. By deploying Critical Race Theory, in partnership with Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering, to infiltrate the state of collegiate athletics in higher education, I take textual resources from the UNC scandal to show the perpetuation of racism in and around collegiate athletics. I also examine how racism in collegiate athletics and higher education contributes to the value placed on lives and how they come to matter to the university. To achieve this goal, I highlight three significant matters from the recent UNC scandal: 1) Mary Willingham’s interactions with the Athletic Support Program for Athletes (ASPA), 2) the connection of the African/Afro-American Studies Department and its Chair, Julius Nyang’oro, and 3) the experiences of student athletes in the profit sports.

The way in which bodies come to matter can provide an explanation as to why individuals feel compelled to meet both the gendered and racial expectations set forth by the university and the athletic machine. This compelling feeling or desire is known as performativity (Butler, 1990/2006, 1993). While Butler did not focus on the potential racial aspects of performativity, she did acknowledge the influence race has on individuals and their respective subjectivities. Whereas Butler’s work concentrated on how gender and sex

can be performative, my intent is to expand Butler's (1990/2006, 1993) provocations about performativity and gender to examine how race plays a pivotal role in the performative actions of individuals that shape their respective subjectivities. Thus, the use of these theories moves normative thinking about the superiorities and inferiorities of gender and racial categories to consider how individuals are compelled to enact performative gendered and racial demands in an effort to matter. With an objective to upset the field of collegiate athletics through an analysis of the recent UNC scandal, I disrupt normative ways of thinking about collegiate athletics by not only debunking racial myths of physicality and deintellectualization but also condemning patriarchy-driven structures, namely higher education institutions and big-time college sports programs. I restate my analytical questions as a way to remind the reader of the ways that these questions will help illuminate the pleas for both bodies and minds to matter to the university and the pervasiveness of racism within higher education and college sports.

- In the field of collegiate athletics, how do bodies emerge as those that matter—and why?
- How can the concept of mattering disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics?

These analytical questions help me look for what collegiate athletics is *doing* to determine how bodies come to matter and what collegiate athletics is *doing* to perpetuate stereotypical notions about race.

In this tale shaped by both Critical Race Theory and the concept of mattering, I employ textual resources from the recent UNC scandal to illustrate the how's and why's of the mattering of bodies. In this Tale of Mattering, I begin with the incident of Willingham's

whistleblowing about the deceptive and discriminatory academic practices for student athletes to show how she fought for the academic development of athletes to matter.

Secondly, I discuss the role of the African/Afro-American Studies Department and the Department Chair, Julius Nyang'oro, in perpetuating a racist culture where athletics mattered more than academics. As a final point, I focus on the prevalence of racial demands for athletes, principally Black athletes, and how race factors into the mattering of Black bodies.

### **The Mattering of Mary Willingham**

#### **Institutional Patriarchy**

To recall, performativity is the coercive force that materializes as an individual's response to conform to common expectations of being in the world. Often, an individual's desire to conform to gendered norms is based on a need to exist as a viable subject and ultimately matter as an individual in the world. Willingham, in her role as tutor in the Academic Support Program for Athletes at UNC, was called on to perform to the expectations of others. As a female, Willingham worked in a male-dominated environment; both the academic and athletic landscapes consisted primarily of male professors, administrators, coaches, and players. Based on gendered expectations of male dominance and control and female subservience, Willingham was supposed to abide by the "do whatever it takes" to keep the athletes eligible program set forth by the Academic Support Program for Athletes (ASPA). The ASPA, in contrast to the Athletic Department it served, consisted primarily of female tutors. Butler's (1990/2006) theory of performativity prompts me to think about how the athletic machine creates performative demands that shape individuals as gendered subjects and how "it has been argued that women ought to perform certain social functions and not others" (Butler, 1993, p. 33). In my thinking with Butler about her

opposition of normative gendered ways of being, I see how the female tutors at UNC were often relegated to similar stereotypical roles of women. Views of women catering to the needs of their families were mimicked and expected by the female tutors in the ASPA, where tutors were expected to take care of the needs of the university's family of athletes. Unlike motherly caretakers who act in the best interest of their children, female tutors in the ASPA were required to compromise their integrity and that of the university by doing what was not in the best *academic* interest of the athletes, but in the *capitalist* interests of the Athletic Department and the university. Like all tutors in the ASPA, Willingham was required to fulfill her role of service by satisfying the needs of others including the Athletic Department's desire to win which hinged on the athlete's ability to stay academically eligible for play. Willingham's desire matched that of the university, the Athletic Department, and the athlete based on the construction of the true student athlete: the athlete who performs at high levels, both academically and athletically. However, behind the façade of the student athlete at UNC was a well-oiled machine designed to manufacture eligible athletes through a compromise of academic standards.

Willingham's gendered experience in the ASPA serves as an additional example of the prevalent institutional patriarchy at UNC, which I also discussed from a different angle in the previous Tale of Marginality. Gender dynamics within the field of college sports and higher education as a whole are pivot points for distinguishing how and why bodies matter. In traditional patriarchal fashion, male bodies are prized as decision makers, while females are seen as followers and those who carry out tasks ordered by male leadership. At UNC, big-time sports and university administration are chiefly driven by male administrators, coaches, professors, and players, with females playing supporting roles as academic advisors,

tutors, and secretaries. To continue the discussion of how those in supporting roles faced a dismissive predominantly male leadership, I present the example of how Willingham raised concerns about the lack of academic remediation for athletes at UNC to further examine how and why certain bodies emerge as those that matter in collegiate athletics.

### **Willingham's Battle for the Academic Remediation of Athletes**

An anonymous football player under UNC Coach Butch Davis (2007-2010) stated that, "All that matters to the powers that be are pushing them [athletes] through and keeping them eligible to play and pass the classes. [As for the goals of the university], having these athletes actually improve, learn, and correct [their reading] problems [is on] the very bottom of the list" (Smith & Willingham, 2015, p. 369). Butler's (1993) concept of mattering helps me to see how at UNC, the physical talents of the athletes mattered more than the education of athletes. The athletic machine promotes individual growth only when it is self-serving to meet its own interests: yielding profit and furthering its own goals to attain victory and primacy on the university campus. In my continued contemplation about what mattered to the university, I am reminded of Butler's (1993) advice that "it will be as important to think about how and to what end bodies are constructed as it will be to think about how and to what end bodies are *not* [original emphasis] constructed" (p. 16). Consequently, what collegiate athletics is *doing* is to construct bodies to perform on the court and field, yet those same bodies were not constructed to participate in the classroom as illustrated by Willingham's experiences tutoring athletes at UNC.

Willingham's complaints about the compromises of academic integrity for athletes on campus were not in a tattle tale-like manner trying to get others (tutors, athletes, coaches, counselors, administrators) in trouble. Willingham voiced her concerns in a genuine attempt



to provide the necessary remediation needed for athletes to succeed academically at UNC. In other words, Willingham fought for the education of athletes to matter in the same way as their physical development and performance, a mattering of both the body and the mind. For example, a UNC athlete, anonymously known as Reg, was one of many academically struggling athletes encountered by Willingham. Students, like Reg, who do not meet the academic requirements for admission to the university, have an opportunity to gain admittance either through obtaining an exemption from the NCAA or by taking summer courses to remediate high school deficiencies. Clearly, the reason individuals, who do not meet minimum academic requirements, are admitted to the university is because their athletic talents matter more than their academic accomplishments. Here, institutions act as what Butler (1993) termed a “vehicle of normalization” (p. 223) by regulating its boundaries through selective admissions, both academic and athletic, and with the power to regulate and control those within its boundaries. Universities hold an ability to categorize and name those within its boundaries and assign them to different places and roles within the university. Just as students are admitted to academic programs of study to prepare for a career, athletes are also admitted to athletic teams to be trained and disciplined for a sports career. Upon further investigation of Reg’s academic records prior to college, Willingham discovered he never passed an end-of-grade test and was passed on from grade to grade through countless exceptions. Willingham was faced with instructing Reg in remedial level reading and writing skills. Reg did not pass English 100 Basic Writing his first semester at UNC and barely passed his other courses. The summer after his freshman year, he received an F in the basic math course. As this put his player eligibility in jeopardy, Reg was retroactively withdrawn from the summer math course, thus erasing the grade from his transcript. Retroactive

withdrawals were just one of many strategies academic staff pulled out of their eligibility bag of tricks. Reg went on to enroll in a series of courses within the African/Afro-American Studies Department along with other athlete-friendly courses, which secured his needed player eligibility. Smith and Willingham (2015) commented about Reg's experience at UNC as follows:

He will never find a peer group outside of athletics and the university authorities he heeds and respects will not be professors and researchers but rather coaches, trainers, and athletic administrators. Finally, hand him over to the architects of the local eligibility machine whose first purpose is to keep him on the field while he is guided through a 'special' curriculum that leads to subpar or nonexistent learning experiences and to no meaningful degree. (pp. 296-297)

Willingham witnessed first-hand what collegiate athletics is *doing* to determine which bodies emerge as those that matter. Athletes like Reg were constructed by the university to play sports, yet were not constructed to obtain a college degree. Reg's academic eligibility clearly mattered more than his academic remediation and the possibility of receiving an authentic college education. Numerous similar experiences led Willingham to seek opportunities outside the ASPA, where the education of students might matter to the university.

### **Willingham Hoped to Transfer Where Education Mattered**

In my thinking with Butler, I see how the university's tactics to compel Willingham to adhere to the normative practices and expectations to maintain player eligibility could be described as what Butler (1993) explained as "a series of normativizing injunctions ... through the threat of psychosis, abjection, psychic unlivability" (pp. 14-15). Willingham was subject to a hostile work environment once she voiced her concerns to directors of the

Academic Support Program for Athletes (ASPA) about the academic wrongdoings involving student athletes. Willingham was repeatedly reassured that everything was fine and advised that these practices were just the way things were in the ASPA: the norm. Her supervisors refused to take action in response to the unauthorized tutor assistance (i.e., completing assignments for athletes). As the academic education of athletes clearly did not matter to the university, Willingham applied for positions outside the ASPA. Willingham requested the transfer to another area of the university, where she would have an opportunity to truly help students in need of academic assistance and support. Willingham was reluctantly moved by university administration to a different area of the institution (away from athletes) as the university hoped Willingham would eventually succumb to the ASPA's commands to keep athletes academically eligible and maintain the status quo. The reluctance was part of the "normativizing injunctions" (Butler, 1993, p. 14) assembled by the university as a hostile work environment to try to compel Willingham to either comply with the directives of the ASPA or reach a point of frustration where she would leave the university. As the university holds "the power to produce bodies" (Butler, 1993, p. 136) as those that matter and those that do not, Willingham was reproduced as one (a body) which no longer mattered to the university when she was moved away from the ASPA. As a result of her vocal complaints about the academic advisement practices and prohibited actions by tutors, Willingham was also stuck with no hope of advancement within the university. Willingham only mattered to the university while she stayed silent about the fraudulent academic practices for athletes. Once she voiced her disagreement with the academic wrongdoings, she did not matter to the university, nor was she allowed to make a difference and matter to the university by helping athletes improve their reading levels. After her transfer to another university department,

Willingham is ostracized by peers and administrators alike as one who turned her back on both the academic and athletic sides of the university. By breaking from the norm of the way things were done in the ASPA, Willingham was subject to these “normativizing injunctions” (Butler, 1993, p. 14) by way of her reluctant move to another area of the university, ostracization by her peers, and the lost hope of institutional promotion. Willingham’s shift from a body that mattered to a body that did not matter shows how the athletic machine determines which bodies emerge as those that matter based on its need to maintain a steady stream of eligible athletes. In its *doings*, collegiate athletics not only works to determine which bodies matter, but also changes how bodies matter. In the case of Willingham, she was quickly changed from a body that mattered to one that did not matter when she refused to comply with the manipulative eligibility tactics.

Administrative leaders’ dismissal of Willingham’s claims about the abusive actions within the Academic Support Program for Athletes (ASPA) clearly sent a message to keep quiet and go along with the program’s goals of maintaining the academic eligibility of star athletes. This atmosphere of silence within the ASPA (e.g., help the athletes, do the assignments, talk to the professors, schedule classes) included doing whatever it takes to oil the wheels of the athletic machine. The performative demands of the athletic machine require the intellect of employees to academically assist athletes but a quieting of their conscience about the morality of their actions. The athletic machine materially rewarded tutors who performed according to its conditions within the ASPA, not only with a paycheck, but also with game tickets and team merchandise. Tutors, like Mary Willingham, who failed to follow the athletic machine’s instructions to assist athletes and ensure their academic eligibility are shunned by the university and those with “blind loyalty to the powder blue” (Smith &

Willingham, 2015, p. 390), as illustrated by her experiences in the Academic Support Program for Athletes.

Tutors like Willingham only mattered to the university while they were helping to construct academically eligible athletes, thus proving that the authentic education of athletes did not matter to the university. The analysis of Willingham's experiences in the ASPA, including incidents of institutional patriarchy, her battle for the academic remediation of athletes, and her own struggle to matter, represents the first major area of focus illustrating how and why certain bodies emerge as those that matter. UNC may have tried to *undo* Willingham's credibility, yet, in so doing, the university contributed to its own *undoing*. In her struggle to matter, Willingham ultimately resisted UNC's deeply entrenched patriarchy by exercising her agency in ways that can help collegiate athletics come *undone*. Acts of resistance such as Willingham's act of whistleblowing, her departure from the university, her winning lawsuit, the successful book exposé, and the creation of an advocacy group for collegiate athletics reform all serve as models for the "unsettling of 'matter'" (Butler, 1993, p. 30) or ways to *undo* the acceptance of the way things are or the status quo, which can lead to "new possibilities, new ways for bodies to matter" (Butler, 1993, p. 30).

Now that I have considered how Willingham only emerged as a body that mattered while she was actively safeguarding the academic eligibility of athletes, the next area of focus extends to how the academic eligibility of athletes could not be secured solely by the operations of the ASPA. The manipulation of athletes' academic eligibility required the collusion of multiple individuals and departments at UNC, namely the African/Afro-American Studies Department and its Chair, Julius Nyang'oro.

## **The African/Afro-American Studies Department: How and Why it Mattered to UNC**

To better see how and why the African/Afro-American Studies Department mattered to UNC, I provide a brief tale to remind the reader of some of the key aspects of the department's origins<sup>12</sup>. The African/Afro-American Studies Department at UNC was born in the midst of the Civil Rights Era when there was an escalating demand for the maturing of Black students at the university. Black students, athletes and non-athletes alike, unified insisting on the physical construction of a building to house the African/Afro-American Studies Department to serve as a center for the enrichment of African and Afro-American culture and studies. With the construction of the Black Cultural Center at UNC in the 1990s, the African/Afro-American Studies Department was positioned to be a central part of the university and student life. Through the expeditious appointment of a novice faculty member from East Africa as department chair due to pressures for a permanent appointment and leadership, the African/Afro-American Studies Department was placed in a vulnerable position. Inclined to extend favors to the Athletic Department, Nyang'oro, also an avid basketball fan, constructed independent study courses as façades deliberately designed to issue high grades in exchange for little or no academic work. In so *doing*, Nyang'oro revealed his allegiance to the university and its normalizing policies and practices favoring athletics over academics. Nyang'oro's positionality at UNC, as a privileged academic from East Africa further demonstrates how race, class, and privilege all contributed to how and why bodies mattered to the university. With an impassioned sports fan as department chair, the Athletic Department was able to take advantage of the vulnerability of the relatively new department and use courses within the department to secure the eligibility of academically

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<sup>12</sup> A more detailed account of The Rise and Fall of the African/Afro-American Studies Department is located in "Chapter 6: A Tale of Marginality."

struggling athletes in the profit sports. Through an intricately designed system, athletes enrolled in no-show courses, submitted a single research paper, and received easy grades virtually guaranteeing continued player eligibility. The African/Afro-American Studies Department and the Black Cultural Center were created under a ruse of mattering to the university, while under the surface, the courses were fabricated in service of the manipulation and security of athlete eligibility. The academic integrity of the department was compromised in service of the exploitation of athletes for financial gain by the university. Butler's (1993) concept of mattering helps me see how the profiting of the university from the performance of Black athletes on the court and field came at the high price, the compromise of integrity within academic units of the university.

University Athletic Departments often take advantage of departments suffering from low enrollment or legitimacy as a means to create safe havens securing the academic eligibility of athletes. This coercive relationship ironically often exploits foreign language departments such as Swahili, Portuguese, and Native American languages, which have historically been victims of exploitation and marginalization. The role of ethnicity and race are both a matter of concern related to the propagation of scandal and fraud in the field of collegiate athletics. At UNC, both ethnicity and race played an integral part in how the scandal developed, as it largely circulated around the African/Afro-American Studies Department and the Chair, Julius Nyang'oro. Nyang'oro's positionality as an East African leading the African/Afro-American Studies Department at UNC raises the question of how the distinctions of race matter and Butler's (1993) concept of mattering sheds light on how this examination of collegiate athletics can disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality.

## **The Distinctions of Race: Africans vs. African Americans**

To show how the distinctions of race mattered in the recent UNC scandal, I first point out the differences between Africans and African Americans. Butler's (1993) reading of race beyond a visual signifier establishes race as more complex than a mere seeing of skin color, as distinguished in the different lived experiences of Africans and African Americans. Race goes beyond skin color to include differences in culture and historical context. The outward appearance and marking of skin can present a story different from that of the individual living within that flesh. Although Black and African American are used interchangeably in my analysis, I seek to differentiate the nuances that come with skin and origin. Most African Americans are descendants of enslaved Africans transported to America during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. African immigrants share a common color and ancestry with African Americans, yet, the similarities diverge in the areas of culture and history. Being a Black African (born Black in Africa) and being a Black American (born Black in America) is a very different existence in the world and especially in America. Many of the differences that contribute to the cultural and relational divide between Black Americans and Black Africans is embedded in a Eurocentric educational curriculum. Both the African and American educational curriculums have been developed with a slant toward predominantly White European historical views which erase much of Black African history and culture. American history education is shaped by a view of Black Africans as part of a primitive and inferior culture group, whereas, African education is marked by a view of Black Americans as "unpredictable and violent" (Darboe, 2006, p. 15). This dominant colonizing Eurocentric vision of Black Africans and Black Americans to each side of the spectrum is a deliberate move to drive a wedge between the groups to prevent the strength which is developed



through unification. Africans have not been subject to the same racial discrimination as have Black Americans who live with daily “(discrimination, exclusion, and violence) associated with being Black in America” (Darboe, 2006, p. 18).

An examination of the nuances of race aids in seeing what collegiate athletics *does* to reinforce racial norms, thus securing the boundaries that separate and divide races. Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering draws attention to the role of race and ethnicity in how certain bodies matter more than others. At the heart of the UNC scandal is the Department of African/Afro-American Studies chaired by a novice professor of East African Studies. How the ethnicity of the department chair and the content of the discipline all contributed to the complexity of the scandal demands further inquiry into how both race and privilege mattered in the education of athletes at UNC.

### **The Positionality of Julius Nyang’oro: How Race and Privilege Mattered**

Julius Nyang’oro, former chair of the African/Afro-American Studies Department at UNC and leading player in the UNC scandal, is an example where an outward appearance does not reconcile with an individual’s positionality. Nyang’oro held a unique position as he did not embody the norm associated with Black skin. Clothed in Black skin and serving as Chair of the African/Afro-American Studies Department at a prominent Southern university gives the illusion that Nyang’oro possesses the same experiences as other Black individuals on campus and in America; however, Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering can help to trouble this assumption. That is, the term African American is reserved for the group of individuals who share a common American history of centuries of enslavement, segregation, and a struggle for racial equality (Hawkins, 2010). Their social identity in America is rooted in this history. Individuals who have

immigrated to the United States voluntarily from Africa and other areas such as the Caribbean do not share this same history of struggle and strife. Following this differentiation between Africans and African Americans, Nyang'oro is a native East African (an African), not an African American who was born and raised within a different historical context. In this case, his outward appearance did not match the lived experiences, attitudes, and positionality of his outward signifier of Black skin. Butler (1993) noted that:

Blackness is not primarily a visual mark ... because what can be seen, what qualifies as a visible marking, is a matter of being able to read a marked body in relation to unmarked bodies, where unmarked bodies constitute the currency of Whiteness. (pp. 170-171)

Butler's (1993) theorizing of Blackness as more than a mere "visual mark" (p. 170) helps me to see beyond Blackness as a "visual mark" to see that in the case of Nyang'oro, his body was read against other bodies as unmarked. In other words, although Nyang'oro had the visual mark of Blackness, his positionality as a privileged academic resulted in a reading of his body as unmarked by Blackness and thus, marked his body with the "currency of whiteness" (p. 170).

In the case of the UNC scandal, Nyang'oro's physical appearance was one that signified Blackness or African American descent. However, Nyang'oro held a status granted to university academics far removed from the academic standing and opportunities of most African Americans. The tales left untold by his skin are the nuances of skin that appearance or *seeing* does not tell. Nyang'oro's East African descent and placement in American by choice versus force carries a privilege not afforded to most of the athletes he served, or rather

disserved, through the bogus courses offered in the African/Afro-American Studies Department.

At UNC, it mattered that the head of the African/Afro-American Studies Department had the “visual mark” (Butler, 1993, p. 170) of Blackness. Appearances mattered to the university as a symbolic gesture that the Chair be representative of the culture and content of the discipline. To faculty in the department, the race and passion of the Chair really mattered as a move representative of the goals of the department to promote and preserve the advancement of African/Afro-American cultural studies. Yet, Nyang’oro, as an East African, did not possess the lived history as that of an African American professor who may have better resisted the temptation to compromise academic integrity and abandon the education of Black athletes.

As Nyang’oro had already achieved the status of mattering to the university through his academic status and standing, he did not work to help the bodies of athletes matter to the university in the same way students mattered to the university. Nyang’oro helped the university establish athletes as what Butler (1993) designated as “bodies [that] fail to materialize [which] provide the necessary ‘outside,’ if not the support, for the bodies, which, in materializing the norm, qualify as bodies that matter” (p. 16). Black university athletes do not embody the norms associated with university students such as race (White) and privilege (upper-class). College athletes in the profit sports help to reinforce and strengthen the norms that define athletes as Black and underprivileged and students as White and privileged. By representing institutional and societal norms associated with college athletes and thus not mattering *in the same way* as students, the presence of athletes helps clarify how athletes do not matter to advance the educational mission of the university, yet matter in ways that

further the university's goals to generate revenues and achieve athletic supremacy. As athletes do not materialize the norm as students of the university, they also do not qualify as bodies that matter enough to obtain a college education. Nyang'oro materialized the norm of the privileged university academic through higher socio-economic status and possession of social capital, and in so doing, also placed athletes 'outside' the boundaries of established student norms and ultimately prevented them from achieving the status of a body that mattered to the university for more than their athletic abilities. The bodies of athletes mattered for what they could generate for the university, not for what their minds could academically acquire. This further demonstrates what collegiate athletics is *doing* to sort and sift bodies as those that matter and those that do not matter. A closer look at the bodies that do not matter reveals that those bodies matter. Yet, they do not matter in the same way as other bodies by being restricted to mattering only for certain reasons. In the case with student athletes, their bodies matter for the ways they can generate profits for the athletic machine, yet they do not matter in ways that grant them access to education.

Both race and privilege were central to the ways in which bodies came to matter at UNC as predominantly Black athletes in the profit sports were often exploited at the hands of White privilege. Existing as the first North Carolina University and as a predominantly White institution, UNC is marked by a primarily White student body, administration, and faculty. In stark contrast stand the predominantly Black bodies of athletes in the profit sports. Unique to the UNC scandal is how Black athletes or bodies were exploited and manipulated through the African/Afro-American Studies Department led by a Black chair. The role the African/Afro-American Studies Department played in the development of the UNC scandal shows how the convergence of race, privilege, opportunity, and desire all aided in the abandonment of

academic integrity for athletic success. I continue to draw attention to the connections of the African/Afro-American Studies Department and athletes in the profit sports as a way to “unsettle the ‘matter’” (Butler, 1993, p. 30) of the recent UNC scandal by revealing how and why things are *done* in the field of collegiate athletics. Only through exposing how and why things are *done* in collegiate athletics can its sphere of influence come *undone*.

Butler (1993) argued that “there is a cost in every identification, the loss of some other set of identifications” (p. 126) and in Nyang’oro’s identification with the institution, there is the loss of his personal integrity and his cultural identity. Nyang’oro embodies the institutional mentality of the ability to possess and own bodies (athletes) as “things” that can be obtained and ultimately controlled. The irony of his position is found in the color of his skin: he is a Black man identifying with the values of a predominantly and historically White institution. This further demonstrates his positionality as in stark contrast of his physical attribute of color, his Blackness. Blackness, in this case, is referring to an association with African Americans, not Africans. In this instance, Nyang’oro acts as the university’s border control by helping the university “constantly police its boundaries against the invasion of” (Butler, 1993, p. 126) Blackness. Thus, Nyang’oro takes on an air of Whiteness through his actions or “acts White” through his hegemonic actions toward the acquiring of a Black star athlete for “use” by the university. That is, the university’s demand for athletic supremacy mimics White supremacy by the use of Black bodies to achieve status and financial gain. Nyang’oro’s Blackness fades to White through his attitudes and actions toward Black athletes on campus. Although it could be determined that Nyang’oro used his position of authority to help Black athletes have an easier academic path through the university out of his allegiance to his Blackness (trying to help out one of “his own” or those like him).

Butler's (1993) theory of mattering offers a way to critique and view this differently; thus, I argue his identification with the predominantly White institution and his desire to fit in and be a part of the university (UNC) allowed him to make decisions out of self-interest. His privilege as a university academic is associated with education as upward mobility and social class and status. Not only did his decisions provide personal benefit and self-preservation, but he also acted in the best interest of the university to do whatever it took to achieve athletic success.

This discussion of how Nyang'oro's positionality and race played a pivotal role in the scandal warrants a return to the previous episode discussed in this tale, the whistleblowing of Willingham. In contrast to Nyang'oro, Willingham's disagreement with the manipulative academic practices involving student athletes was *camouflaged* by the color of her skin and her gender. Willingham's whiteness "blends in" with the predominantly White university landscape. Her whiteness is a presumed agreement with the marginalizing practices and academic tactics to maintain player eligibility. This assumed complicity or accomplice-like role comes from both Willingham's race and gender. First, her whiteness carries the expectation that she holds the same views of the dominant White leadership at the university, which is to push star athletes through the easiest academic path possible to keep those athletes eligible for play. Sustained player eligibility ensures the continuous flow of revenues from the profit sports. Second, her gender also assumes a role of passivity, where females hold roles of subservience and tend to defer to the leadership and direction of their male counterparts, such as the primary male leadership at UNC. The contradictions of the stereotypical views of race and gender illustrate the failure to present a fixed way of being for specific races and genders and for all individuals therein. Although she is pushed to the

“outside” of the university<sup>13</sup> due to her public criticism of the fraudulent academic practices with student athletes, Willingham’s whiteness allows her to successfully move “outside” the university and write a critical account of the UNC scandal and become an advocate for the reform of collegiate athletics.

To gesture forward to the next episode of the scandal discussed in this tale: the exploitation of student athletes, I briefly discuss how the race of student athletes determined how their voices were heard in relation to the scandal. Similar to Willingham, many student athletes such as Rashad McCants openly criticized the poor facsimile of an education received by star athletes at UNC. The credibility of athletes has been diminished through counterattacks by UNC. The university has gone to extreme measures to discredit the accounts of former athletes by dismissing their stories and experiences as either abnormal or untrue. Ultimately, the university attempts to place blame on the athletes by stating that the athletes “chose” to take easy courses or that they did not possess the necessary intellect to succeed in rigorous college courses. Based on my analysis in this dissertation, I also assert that as the majority of profit sports athletes are Black, their Blackness plays a critical role in determining their credibility and the ultimate believability of their stories. Blackness, especially a male gendered Blackness, carries the mark of *always already* “guilty,” no matter the claim or offense.

### **The Citation of Norms**

Butler (1993) maintained that “The norm ... takes hold to the extent that it is ‘cited’ as such a norm, but it also derives its power through the citation that it compels” (p. 13) and in Nyang’oro’s case, he was compelled to “cite the norm” of the stereotypical Black college

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<sup>13</sup> For further discussion about how Willingham was forced outside the university, see “Chapter 6: A Tale of Marginality.”

athlete. Through a relegation of the athletes to the court and field and a prohibition from the classroom and a college education, Nyang'oro helps the university to secure the norm of the college athlete; yet, by passing the athletes through the academic courses, he also helps the university create the facade of the student athlete. Nyang'oro is also compelled to "cite the norm" of himself as the privileged academic and in so doing, and especially in the case of UNC as a predominantly White institution (PWI), the norm of the privileged academic is *always already* that of a privileged White academic. This is a *doing* that shows how collegiate athletics establishes racial boundaries of class and privilege, thus securing prevailing thoughts and normative assumptions about race. Butler's (1993) concept of *matter*ing can help us disrupt this commonality of racism in collegiate athletics.

By creating an intricate system whereby athletes were ushered into and out of sham courses requiring little to no academic work in exchange for easy good grades, Nyang'oro sufficiently oiled the wheels of the athletic machine to his own and the university's satisfaction. He also made himself and the department "look good" to the university through the increase in majors, enrollment, and new course offerings. In so doing, he contributed to the perpetuation of the Black superiority/inferiority rhetoric as common sense thinking. If "he" thinks that, then others have permission to also follow this line of thinking. Butler (1993) asserted that Blackness can be viewed as an infectious disease by stating "if [he] associates with Blacks, [he] becomes Black, where the sign of Blackness is contracted, as it were, through proximity, where 'race' itself is figured as a contagion transmissible through proximity" (Butler, 1993, p. 171). Thinking with Butler about race, and more specifically Blackness, as contagious, I theorize how Nyang'oro could have viewed



his relationships with Black athletes as a way he might contract their Blackness. That is, although it may have seemed like he was helping the athletes have an easier academic path through the university, in reality, he helped the university withhold an authentic education from the athletes at UNC. Perhaps his pushing athletes through a series of sham courses was a way of immunizing himself from the racial and historical norms commonly associated with Blackness. Nyang'oro had the opportunity to dispel the myth of Black physical superiority and intellectual inferiority through his own example of intellectual achievement, yet, he chose to contribute to the essentialist thinking and commonsense thinking about Blacks, especially Black college athletes. As Nyang'oro associated with the university, it was a way of also disassociating himself from his Blackness, and thus, helped perpetuate the racist views of young male Black athletes as academically inept. This further demonstrates how privilege can become disassociated with underprivilege and lack. Privilege is preserved by means of preventing class transcendence as education is a key element to class transcendence and social mobility.

Butler's (1990/2006, 1993) theories of performativity and mattering show how individuals are motivated by a desire to matter, and ultimately are predisposed to want to be valued by others. The ways in which individuals have compromised integrity and personal beliefs to meet the expectations of academic departments, institutions, athletics, and society as a whole further demonstrate how and why selected bodies matter more than others.

By bringing forward what collegiate athletics is doing to maintain and sustain the status quo, I point out the reasons why structures, like collegiate athletics, work so diligently to secure racial and class hierarchies. As a result of not accepting collegiate athletics as just

the way it is and hoping to undo the way collegiate athletics is done, I point out how racist assumptions of Black male athletes contribute to the exploitation of Black bodies for financial gain. Returning to my first analytical question which examines the mattering of bodies, I posit that race plays a pivotal role in how and why bodies come to matter in the field of collegiate athletics. Highlighting what collegiate athletics does to use race as a deciding factor about which bodies matter more than others can lead to ways collegiate athletics may come undone and be done differently. To lay the foundation for the last part of my analysis which focuses on the devaluation of Black college athletes, I begin with how the mixing of Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and Butler's (1993) concept of mattering can prove valuable toward a disruption of racism as a commonality in college sports, the second analytic prompt for my project.

### **The Intermingling of Critical Race Theory and Mattering**

In recognition of the indisputable applicability and usefulness toward an examination of how the structure of higher education contributes to the exploitation and marginalization of student athletes, this part of my analysis includes principal theoretical positions and references from Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). To further see how racial norms taint the field of collegiate athletics, I discuss how Critical Race Theory informs and supports Butler's (1993) theory of mattering. The interplay of both theories illuminates how race plays a critical role in the mattering of bodies.

Butler (1993) argued that "'race' is partially produced as an effect of the history of racism, that its boundaries and meanings are constructed over time not only in the service of racism, but also in the service of the contestation of racism" (p. 18). Consistent with Butler's (1993) viewing of race, I assert that racial oppression is both prevalent and customary in the

world of collegiate and professional athletics. The race of many student athletes has also labeled them as a need-to-pass-through population with a propagation of low expectations and a continued deprivation of educational opportunities. Rampant racism is present in both athletics and higher education. The combination of CRT and Butler creates a new configuration of concepts, which inform one another and come together in Butler's (1993) concept of mattering. As I examine how some bodies matter more than others, CRT helps me to see the role race plays in the mattering of bodies. Thus, this analysis is an interwoven presentation of how the tenets of CRT inform and support Butler's (1993) concept of mattering, and in turn, how Butler's (1993) concept of mattering also aids in a more comprehensive understanding of CRT.

Referencing the recent UNC scandal involving student athletes, Smith and Willingham (2015) stated, "Race lies at the center of the UNC story" (p. 35). While my analysis does not exclusively focus on race, I cannot ignore the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and their application toward the regulation of student athletes and as also stated by Hawkins (2010), "race still matters" (p. xii). The mattering of race aids my inquiry of:

- In the field of collegiate athletics, and specifically in the UNC scandal, how do bodies emerge as those that matter—and why?
- How can the concept of mattering disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics?

### **The Devaluation of Black Athletes: A Disruption of Racism**

What does collegiate athletics do? Coming back to the overarching analytical question of my project, I continue with Butler's (1993) concept of mattering to see the

significance of race in the mattering of athletes within collegiate athletics. I not only wish to break open the field of collegiate athletics to reveal the many episodes of racism, but to create the occasion for a disruption of racism which can be what Butler (1993) called “an enabling disruption, the occasion for a radical rearticulation of the symbolic horizon in which bodies come to matter” (p. 23). Through the conceptual configuration of Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering and Critical Race Theory, I analyze what collegiate athletics is *doing* to help secure racial boundaries and how it reinforces racial norms. Shaped by historical racial views that categorize individuals’ abilities (physical and mental) based on race, strategic relations of power in collegiate athletics help secure racial boundaries, which prevent individuals from crossing over into spaces of opportunity, such as higher education.

How can the concept of mattering disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics? Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering, coupled with CRT, assists me in this troubling of racism in collegiate athletics and higher education. Not only is racism rarely acknowledged within higher education, when racism is *named*, oftentimes it is in essentialist terms assuming all athletes of color have identical experiences based on their race or ethnic group, and to this point, Ehlers (2012) asserted that “the citations of racial norms do not reflect internality but, rather, produce what they name” (p. 8). In this case, the formation of the subject, student athletes or rather athlete students, is based on racialized norms such as the “physical superiority and intellectual inferiority of Blacks” (Hawkins, 2010, p. 57). That is, college athletes, disproportionately Black, are plagued by a dual discourse of both ability and deficit: athletic proficiency and academic deficiency. Butler (1993) reminded us that “the embodying of norms is a compulsory practice, a forcible production” (p. 231), which also applies to the ways racial norms are brought about by naming and repetition. Marked by

racial norms and a deficit discourse that declares the worthlessness of their lives and their inability to succeed, Black college athletes forcibly participate in systems such as collegiate athletics that regulate and determine their possible subject positions. Thus, although racial norms of both lack and abundance do not reflect an internal reality, they are reinforced as truth. By stating racial norms and the tenets of Critical Race Theory in the following sections of this analysis, it is not my intent to perpetuate stereotypical views and assumptions about race. Instead, “when a given injury has remained unspoken for too long” (Butler, 1993, p. 37), my aim is to point out the prevailing ideas about race which play out daily in college sports and higher education. By *naming* them not as racial norms, but as racism, I establish the fallacy of racial norms and presumptive thinking and beliefs about race in order to show the possibility of creating new ways of seeing race in America through an analysis of the ways athletics overshadowed academics in the recent UNC scandal.

I primarily consider race along the lines of Black (African American) and White as this is the prevailing racial divide in America as well as collegiate athletics and higher education. In so doing, I am mindful of Butler’s (1993) warning that: “When we consider that the very concept of matter preserves and recirculates a violation, we run the risk of reproducing the very injury for which we seek to redress” (p. 54). Therefore, I do not wish to reinforce and increase the chasm that separates these two races. I also do not wish to insinuate that only Black and White racial relations matter and merit study. I do affirm that Black and White relations are at the most critically tense state since the Civil Rights Era due to the increased level of violence by police and civilians against Black citizens, and hence, demand further inquiry and attention. I also wish to clarify that I take a stand against universalist terms and essentialized views of individuals within the Black and White

spectrum and it is not my intent to use such terms or present those views. I also disrupt the traditional privileging of Whiteness over Blackness by reversing the binary by stating Black before White.

The above analysis of the African/Afro-American Studies Department and its Chair, Nyang'oro, revealed that race and racism played a pivotal role in the ways the UNC scandal unfolded such as enlisting the department chair as a dual agent of both tokenism and privilege working for the interests of himself and the university. The creation of a new curriculum in African/Afro-American Studies near the end of the Civil Rights era, continued struggles for department leadership and adequate university resources, the expeditious appointment of a novice department chair from East Africa, and the university's overwhelming desire for athletic championships, all showed how deeply race mattered in how Black athletes were treated or more accurately, mistreated at UNC.

**Race critically matters.** In this section of my analysis focusing on Black college athletes, I focus on: racism as a commonality, embedded racial hierarchies, and collegiate athletics as a labor market to explore how bodies emerge as those that matter—and why. To lay out the claim that both the bodies and minds of Black athletes are devalued in collegiate athletics, I utilize examples from the recent UNC scandal to draw attention to how the bodies of Black athletes only mattered for capitalist gain and also how the minds of athletes did not matter in the same way.

***Racism as a commonality.*** Lynch and Baker (2005) stated that “because the values, perspectives, and life worlds of dominant groups permeate cultural and institutional norms, members of oppressed groups have their lives interpreted through the lens of the dominant, as ‘common sense’” (p. 143). In the matter of collegiate athletics, the disproportionate

presence of Black student athletes in the revenue sports is part of “common sense” thinking. The supposed naturalness of collegiate athletics as common sense is prevalent through media portrayals which both glamorize and normalize current academic and athletic practices at colleges and universities. This includes a normalization of a glamorized vision of the African American college athlete and a perpetuated de-naturalization of the African American college student. Specific to the UNC scandal, athletes in the profit sports were recruited on the premise of becoming part of a winning athletic team, i.e. becoming a star athlete. These same “star” athletes, primarily Black, were funneled through a course of study aimed toward guaranteed eligibility, not graduation. Butler (1993) declared “‘race’ is the instrument and effect of ‘racism,’ or its interpellating moment” (p. 123) and in the case of collegiate athletics, the racial marking of athletes as Black acts as their “interpellating moment” into the revival of historical ideologies of the intellectual inferiority of the Black race. This represents a move far beyond the notion of “a dumb jock,” commonly associated with White male athletes. In the viewing of interpellation as a call which forms bodies and constitutes them as subjects, interpellation can be seen as an injury or as a way of hurting bodies. In this sense, interpellation as bodily injury may be perceived as another way of deciding which bodies matter by hailing them into becoming bodies that do not matter.

Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering can begin to trouble the acceptance of racism as a commonality as illustrated by the rare presence of the African American college student and the saturated image of the African American athlete. The troubling of the everyday acceptance of racism in college sports is a way to make the familiar become strange. Butler (1993) urged that terms like race and racism “ought to be repeated in directions that reverse and displace their originary aims” (p. 123) and thus, this restating of the everyday conditions

and accepted landscape as strange aligns with such aims to reposition the assumed and known as different and more complex than seen from the outside. By stating the familiar and questioning the how and why of its existence, the presence of collegiate athletics in higher education suddenly becomes strange and suspect. For that reason, I disrupt the ascendancy and rule of collegiate athletics in higher education in an effort to re-state the familiar as strange. By repositioning the acceptance of how things are in collegiate athletics and higher education as a whole, we can unravel the how and why of the conditions that enable its existence and progression. This is a working to make the familiarity of the prevalence of Black athletes, not Black students, strange. If the vision of the Black body as an athlete and not a college student could be reversed to establish the normalization of Black male individuals as students, not athletes, it could dispel the assumption of a Black individual on a college campus as an athlete, not a student. Preconceived notions and essentialized visions of Black bodies dressed in athletic apparel and gear, not in classroom clothes or graduation regalia can be changed through stories highlighting the academic achievements of Black individuals as students over those featuring their athletic talents. The face of higher education could literally change with this re-envisioning of Black college students as students, first and foremost, and athletes second.

***Embedded racial hierarchies.*** Who gains access to the most desired schools, jobs, social groups, and so on is determined by embedded racial hierarchies. These racial hierarchies comprised of university chancellors and presidents, college administrators, head coaches, athletic directors are predominantly White and could be referred to as what Butler (1993) called “a white gaze ... one which passes its own perspective off as the omniscient” (p. 136). Butler (1993) further extended the “white gaze” as “a gaze that has the power to



produce bodies, but which itself is no body” (p. 136). Institutions stand as this gaze that is no body, yet they have the power to take Black bodies and produce them as subjects of the athletic machine. Student athletes are the subjects required by the university’s athletic machine, because the university needs to justify the presence of athletes on the university campus by portraying them as both students and athletes. As subjects of the athletic machine, athletes depend on the normalizing gaze of institutions to become students and remain athletes. Furthermore, in Butler’s (1993) reading of Nella Larsen’s *Passing*, she relates Clare’s dependence on her White husband, by stating that she is “attached to him and his norm for her economic well-being” (p. 183). In a similar way, athletes are “attached to [the university] and [its] norm for [their] economic well-being” as athletes depend on the normalizing gaze of the institution to transform them into students so they can play sports in hopes of stardom and a professional sports career.

Institutions hold the power to transform who they admit or accept into the university. Oftentimes, institutions admit students to the university without truly accepting them into their social world by not permitting them access to education. This prohibition from education and regulation of bodies for the capitalist purposes of the athletic machine leaves little opportunity for athletes to transcend the current limits of class and social status. To extend this analysis, I use Butler’s (1993) theory of mattering to point out the voyeuristic nature of college sports with an abundance of White fans casting a watchful gaze upon the Black bodies as figures of entertainment. The stark division of race is magnified through primarily White college student bodies and sports spectators; yet Blacks are disproportionately represented as the face of college and professional sports. The clear segregation of Black and White bodies on athletic fields reminds me of how Butler (1993)

questioned why certain bodies are segregated from others by discerning that this could be “a visual pacification of subjects by whom White [people] are imagined to be socially endangered” (p. 135). Through the threat of racial transcendence into spaces normally designated as White spaces such as higher education, athletes (Black bodies) pose a threat, whether imagined or real, to the purity of those spaces as White only in preservation of White privilege.

*Collegiate athletics as a labor market.* Society has low motivation to address issues and occurrences of racism within college athletics due to the reaping of personal and financial benefits to the ruling race and class. Overwhelmingly universities profit from the unpaid labor of athletes posed as students. These supposed student athletes are predominantly Black and of lower socioeconomic status. As hegemony, colleges and universities are the recipient of the wealth generated by college sports while student athletes are the donors of labor and skill in exchange for an education. Regrettably, this education is often incomplete through attrition or an education built on low expectations (an eligibility education).

College sports can be considered a labor market due to the highly competitive environment for prospective college athletes. Butler (1993) maintained that “Enduring and viable identity is thus purchased through subjection and subjectivation by the patronym” (p. 153) and in a similar way, I position the university as the patriarch who has the power to confer identities that matter based on a subjection to its mandates. By committing to the university, athletes likewise take on the university’s name or patronym, and thus, purchase the “viable identity” of a student. Through recruiting high school students and the act of naming them as commits,<sup>14</sup> institutions lay claim to athletes as institutional property. This

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<sup>14</sup> Commits is a term used to describe recruited high school athletes, who have signed a letter of intent committing themselves to attend a specific university.

analogous kinship relationship of university and athlete is a way of the university marking athletes as “ours” or “mine,” but not yet part of “us.”

Continuing the discussion of collegiate athletics as a labor market, Jensen (2013) similarly asserted that, “In such a world, everything and everyone is a commodity in the market” (p. 29). Thus, the commodification of student athletes is apparent through the ways in which colleges and universities actively recruit them. Commenting on the role institutions play in the interpellation of individuals, Ahmed (2012) argued that, “To be recruited by an institution is not only to join up but also to sign up: to inhabit is to turn around as a return of its address” (p. 40). Student scholarship athletes submit to more of a job interview than a college admissions process. Years of athletic practice and competition commence with high school juniors and seniors subjected to the rigorous process of analysis by college athletic program scouts through game film analysis, live game observations, and physical and medical examinations. The high stakes college recruiting game was captured by Feldman (2007) in what he termed the *Meat Market*. The title *Meat Market* certainly evokes images of bodies lined up for inspection and taken by the highest bidder. The deeper, more disturbing nature of this analogy is its nod toward a slave market. The bodies of high school athletes are treated like “meat” ready for inspection and purchase by college coaches and recruiters (the buyers). Although the highest bidders in this case are college coaches, the expected loyalty and intense dedication demanded of student athletes can mirror more of an ownership scenario than free agency.

To view the college athletic recruiting process is to see more of a conscription process than a college enrollment process. Branch (2011) cautioned the quick use of the slavery analogy; yet, he along with other authors range from mere references to the dedication of

book titles such as *Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete* (Rhoden, 2006), and *Meat Market* (Feldman, 2007). The prevalent references in related literature indicate the recurrent presence of oppressive conditions for many student athletes in today's collegiate athletic environment, especially those in the revenue sports. The profiting of colleges and capitalist structures (corporations) from the unpaid labor of student athletes "is to catch an unmistakable whiff off the plantation" (Branch, 2011, p. 15).

Racism as a commonality, embedded racial hierarchies, and the ways collegiate athletics resembles a labor market all underwrite how Butler's theory of mattering brings out how and why the Black bodies of athletes are subject to racist attitudes, assumptions, and actions at higher education institutions. The college recruitment process magnifies the ways bodies of Black athletes matter only for the wealth their bodies can labor and produce for colleges and universities and how those same athletes' bodies do not matter in ways that allow them access to the social and economic capital that comes with a college education

### **Conclusion: Moving Toward New Ways of Doing Collegiate Athletics**

This tale has highlighted three key aspects of the recent UNC scandal, Willingham's whistleblowing, the African/Afro-American Studies Department, and university athletes, as illustrations of how collegiate athletics play a role in the ways bodies come to matter. This tale started by describing Butler's (1993) concept of mattering and arguing for the use of her theory toward seeing how and why certain bodies matter more than others. The tale goes on to consider how Critical Race Theory supports Butler's (1993) theory of mattering to show how race factors into the mattering of athletes in the profit sports.

This analysis has illuminated what collegiate athletics is doing to maintain the status quo and keep things the way they currently are in big-time sports programs with a

disproportionate number of Black athletes in the profit sports alongside predominantly white student bodies and university leadership. One of the principal issues which arose out of the theoretical analysis of the UNC scandal was the prevalence of racist assumptions, attitudes, and actions related to Black athletes. I have brought these racist incidents to light as an “unsettling of ‘matter’” (Butler, 1993, p. 30) and with a hope to disrupt racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics. Most importantly, the aim of this analysis is to create “new possibilities, new ways for bodies to matter” (Butler, 1993, p. 30) and to pave the way for new ways of seeing academics and athletics in higher education.

## Chapter 8: A Tale with No End: Doing, Undoing, and Redoing Collegiate Athletics

*“A critique does not consist in saying that things aren’t good the way they are. It consists in seeing on just what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established and unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based, in showing that things are not as obvious as people believe ... To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy.”*

*(Foucault, 1981, p. 31)*

I open with this quote by Foucault (1981) not only due to its relevance to my critical work in this dissertation, but also as a gesture back to how I first “came to theory” (St. Pierre, 2001, p. 142)<sup>15</sup> through the words of Foucault. This return to Foucault also represents the spiraling nature of post-qualitative work, where as a researcher, I have continued to come back to the literature and the theory that serve as the basis for my dissertation study. In a post-qualitative framework, I come back to what I have read again in hopes of what new knowledge will come forth from another deeper, closer reading. Each time I have returned to the textual resources from the recent UNC scandal and the theories of Spivak and Butler employed in my study, it has been a new reading. The post-qualitative methodology used in my study involves reading the theory and reading the textual resources until it becomes what Spivak (2014) described as a reflex. Spivak (2014) wrote about the application of theory to our readings as “Our own way of thinking changes so that when we are reading, all of the theoretical reading begins to organize our reading, but not because we are applying it” (p. 77). In essence, the theory becomes part of the way we think about what we read and what we see in the world or as termed by Jackson and Mazzei (2012) this is “thinking with

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<sup>15</sup> My “coming to theory” (St. Pierre, 2001, p.142) is detailed in the Introduction to this dissertation.

theory.” Thus, through my reading of the theories by Spivak and Butler, “my way of thinking has changed” about what I have read about collegiate athletics, and more specifically, the UNC scandal. I now think of collegiate athletics as a threat to the future of higher education due to its privileging of athletics over academics.

The goal of my project has been to look into the field of collegiate athletics through a poststructural lens using different theoretical concepts from Spivak and Butler to address the overarching question of my dissertation project: What does collegiate athletics do? By returning to the overarching question of my study, I organize this conclusion around the three main ideas generated by this interrogation of collegiate athletics: 1) to expose the *doings* of collegiate athletics (the issues associated with the way collegiate athletics is currently *done*), 2) to reveal the *undoings* of collegiate athletics (how a theoretical analysis can help *undo* collegiate athletics), and 3) to urge the *redoings* of collegiate athletics (recommendations for how to *do* collegiate athletics differently). Through this poststructural examination of big-time sports programs in higher education, I see the doings of collegiate athletics: how it functions like a *machine*, how it *marginalizes* individuals, namely student athletes, and how the race of student athletes contributes to *how and why they matter* to the university and the athletic machine. The point of my study has been to expose the structural conditions that enable the operations of the athletic machine that I term the current *doings* of collegiate athletics. My analysis has identified ways that collegiate athletics could come *undone* through a questioning of the easy acceptance of athletics in higher education as the status quo. My study employed both poststructural theory and post-qualitative methodology to shape conceptual tales aimed to trouble the ways big-time sports programs have come to dominate the landscapes of colleges and universities. Thus, this conclusion offers an

opportunity for me to offer ideas revealed in my analysis that move toward a *redoing* of collegiate athletics, different ways for academics and athletics to inhabit higher education institutions.

In the forthcoming sections, I start with an overview of how my study connects to the literature as a way of reminding the readers of the current *doings* of collegiate athletics. I follow with the significance of both poststructural theory and post-qualitative methodology in opening up ways to *undo* collegiate athletics, which also helped shape the analytical questions that guided my research. By troubling the current *doings* of collegiate athletics through the use of theoretical concepts by Spivak and Butler, my analysis was a way of *undoing* collegiate athletics. This analytical *undoing* of collegiate athletics exposed implications for educational leadership and thus I present these implications as ways of *redoing* collegiate athletics. I also discuss both the limitations of this study and recommendations for future inquiry. Lastly, I conclude with my final thoughts on the *doing*, *undoing*, and *redoing* of collegiate athletics. I open with an overview of the primary issues that emerged through a review of the literature about collegiate athletics.

### **Connections to the Literature: The *Doings* of Collegiate Athletics**

My earlier critique of collegiate athletics<sup>16</sup> (Benedict & Keteyian, 2013; Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2001; Feldman, 2007; Harrison, 2000; Lewis, 2010; Nixon, 2014; Rhoden, 2006; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010) exposed several primary issues of concern including: amateurism, sports careerism, the struggle for both academic and athletic elitism, the impact of Title IX on both higher education and athletics, admission of academically underprepared athletes, and the financial aspects of collegiate athletics. In my study, I directed close

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<sup>16</sup> This critique is located in “Chapter 2: A Critical Tale: The Paradoxes of Academics and Athletics in Higher Education.”



attention to recent academic scandals and frauds stemming from the admission of underprepared students and the central drive to maintain student athlete eligibility. I also discussed the social justice implications of the parallel existence of academics and athletics in higher education including the exploitation and marginalization of student athletes and the compromise of academic integrity in higher education for athletic success.

The literature connected to my study of collegiate athletics was presented, in “Chapter 2: A Critical Tale,” as a critique of the presence of big-time sports programs in higher education, so I now move to an explanation of why knowledge of poststructural theory enabled me to turn a critical eye toward athletics in higher education.

### **Significance of Poststructural Theory: How the Theory Helps *Undo* Collegiate Athletics**

Referencing poststructuralism, Weedon (1997) noted, “a theory is useful if it is able to address the questions of how social power is exercised and how social relations of gender, class, and race might be transformed” (p. 20) and accordingly, poststructural theory has aided in my aim to interrogate the paradoxes of athletics and academics in higher education. In my poststructural analysis of collegiate athletics using the textual resources of the recent UNC scandal, I used the central ideas of poststructural theory—language, subjectivity, and power—to trouble the ways athletics and academics inhabit higher education.

### **Language**

The construction of the term, student athlete, played a pivotal role in my study of collegiate athletics. Following poststructural views, language carries a trace of historical context, acquires a current historical context, and is also open to transformation in future settings. In the case of collegiate athletics, the term, student athlete, is marked by the trace of its past origins and meanings; yet, the same term can be resignified with different meanings

in a contemporary context. Through my repeated examination of how and why the term, student athlete, was created, I uncovered the *doings* of collegiate athletics: how institutions use the term, student athlete, to cover over the ways athletes are used to generate revenue, while their access to the classroom is limited. Weedon (1997) maintained that “The meaning of the existing structure of social institutions, as much as the structures themselves and the subject positions which they offer their subjects, is a site of political struggle waged mainly, though not exclusively, in language [original emphasis]” (p. 37) and likewise, my analysis has aimed to disrupt the normalization of the term, student athlete, and the meanings associated with the term and unsettle the politically-based intentions of universities to protect their images as educational institutions. As a consequence, to open up new ways for athletes to inhabit colleges and universities is for those athletes to inhabit those spaces not with ease, but as a site of struggle for different ways of being in those institutions.

### **Subjectivity**

How the term, student athlete, contributes to the shifting subjectivities of individuals was also a primary concern in my analysis. According to Weedon (1997), “[Language] is the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed [original emphasis]” (p. 21), and therefore, I argue that the naming of individuals as student athletes represents “a place where the [student athlete’s] sense of self ... is constructed.” The labeling of athletes as student athletes leads to a conflicting sense of self as athletes are re-minded that they are both student and athlete, despite the dominating role of sports in their educational experience. Since language is not fixed, but open to a range of meanings and future resignifications, my analysis opens up the term, student athlete, to the possibility of new significations and new ways of being an athlete at colleges and universities.

## **Power: *Undoing* Collegiate Athletics Through Agency and Resistance**

Poststructural theory puts forward that “the analysis of and resistance within power relations must proceed on a case-by-case basis” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 492) rather than promoting the possibility of a complete abolishment of power. In this way, poststructural views of power align with my approach to this study to take the case of the recent UNC scandal as a means to show opportunities for agency and resistance within the power relations inherent in the field of collegiate athletics. In the subsequent sections, I take the same three areas of focus from the recent UNC scandal (Mary Willingham, the African/Afro-American Studies Department, and student athletes) used in my analysis to show occasions for agency and resistance in the *undoing* of collegiate athletics.

**Mary Willingham.** The analysis of Willingham’s experiences in the ASPA, including incidents of institutional patriarchy, her battle for the academic remediation of athletes, and her own struggle to matter, opened up a way to *undo* collegiate athletics. UNC may have tried to *undo* Willingham’s credibility by disputing her claims about the manipulation of academic eligibility for athletes, yet, in so doing, the university contributed to its own *undoing*. In her struggle to matter, Willingham ultimately resisted UNC’s deeply entrenched patriarchy by exercising her agency in ways that can help collegiate athletics come *undone*. Acts of resistance such as Willingham’s act of whistleblowing, her departure from the university, her winning lawsuit, the completion of a Master’s thesis critiquing the NCAA, the successful book exposé, and the creation of an advocacy group for collegiate athletics reform all serve as models for the “unsettling of ‘matter’” (Butler, 1993, p. 30) or ways to *undo* the acceptance of the way things are or the status quo, which can lead to “new possibilities, new ways for bodies to matter” (Butler, 1993, p. 30). Currently, Willingham

continues to *undo* collegiate athletics through her work of resistance through her creation of Paper Class, Inc., an athletic reform organization, and PCRead, a non-profit literacy group.

### **The African/Afro-American Studies Department and its Chair, Julius**

**Nyang'oro.** The case of the African/Afro-American Studies Department and its Chair, Julius Nyang'oro exhibits a pattern of missed opportunities for agency and resistance and the use of poststructural theories of power and resistance helped open up and expose these potential spaces of resistance. Nyang'oro, as Chair of the Department of African/Afro-American Studies, holds the status of a privileged academic and has the ability to help dispel the myth of Black intellectual inferiority, but instead, perpetuates stereotypical views of young Black male college athletes as physically adept and intellectually inept. By acting out of self-interest and on behalf of the university's desire for athletic success and financial gain, Nyang'oro helped usher athletes through a series of sham courses with no academic substance in service of player eligibility. Although some may view Nyang'oro's *doings* as helping athletes to walk an easier path while at the university, poststructuralism helps me see the many missed opportunities for *doing* something to help athletes to authentically succeed academically.

**Student athletes: The possible realization of the term.** Poststructural views of language, subjectivity, and power help open up spaces of resistance for student athletes. By raising questions about the current *doings* of collegiate athletics, a space is created for *undoing* the way collegiate athletics is *done*. Butler (1993) viewed agency differently as:

The compulsion to repeat an injury is not necessarily the compulsion to repeat the injury in the same way or to stay fully within the traumatic orbit of that injury. The force of repetition in language may be the paradoxical condition by which a certain

agency ... is derived from the *impossibility* [original emphasis] of choice. (Butler, 1993, p. 124)

and similarly, I view the attempts by colleges and universities to insist on the naming of athletes as student athletes, while determining their educational experiences based on player eligibility as an injury inflicted by colleges and universities. Yet, as Butler (1993) suggests that agency can be generated through the lack of choice, and in a similar manner, I maintain that the attempts by the athletic machine to push athletes away from academics and pull them into athletics offers athletes an opportunity to *resist doing* collegiate athletics in the same way. Thus, I consider this *resisting* the *doing* of collegiate athletics in the same way as a means of *redoing* collegiate athletics.

Does the naming of athletes as athletes first and students second actually open up more opportunities for athletes to receive an authentic college education? By recognizing and acknowledging the commitment to athletics (big-time sports programs), athletes may be freer to demand the time and opportunities to obtain their education. The naming of athletes as athlete students could be an emancipatory action to create a space where individuals could live as both athlete and student.

Reflecting on his personal experience at UNC as a member of the 2005 NCAA championship team and his reading of the book *Cheated* (Smith & Willingham, 2015), Rashad McCants commented:

This book informed me that, as a black athlete and a student, more awareness and information about the universities you attend must be thoroughly analyzed before making a decision about your future. The details of fraudulent education and unprepared black athletes in this book should shame our society. I am a living

testimony that this book is the Pandora's box of university secrets and black athlete exploitation. (p. 2)

McCants's vocal complaints about the exploitation of Black athletes in college sports based on his own experience at UNC creates a space for discourse of resistance about fraudulent academic practices at colleges and universities related to athletes. As a result of the unmasking of the deceptive tactics to maintain the eligibility of athletes at UNC, the sister of McCants and a former UNC football player, Ramsay, have filed suit against UNC and the NCAA claiming breach of contract and negligence through the failure to provide educationally sound courses and the disregard of rampant academic fraud involving student athletes and the sham courses within the Department of African/Afro-American Studies. The claimants are seeking class action status in hopes of drawing interest from other UNC athletes and mounting a more widespread effort of resistance toward the *undoing* of the prevalent practices of academic fraud at colleges and universities nationwide.

An additional recent example of the power of student athletes as a group was illustrated at the University of Missouri in November 2015. While this incident is not specifically tied to the UNC scandal, the event reveals some implications for my work. Few took notice when a lone graduate student went on a hunger strike demanding the resignation of the college president over a racially hostile campus environment. When the football team joined the cause by refusing to play in the next game against Brigham Young University (BYU), many took notice. The university stood to lose millions of dollars by forfeiting the contest against BYU. The president and chancellor both resigned just weeks later. When athletes realize their strength or position of power or strong position, they may claim to more equitable treatment. For example, some universities are reconsidering one-year renewable

scholarships in favor of four-year guaranteed scholarships. Universities implemented the one-year scholarships to protect the university against player injury and recruiting mistakes.

### **Significance for Post-Qualitative Methodology: How the Method Aids in an *Undoing* of Collegiate Athletics**

As post-qualitative research exists as an on-going critique of structuralism, this dissertation study also represents an on-going critique of collegiate athletics by presenting what collegiate athletics is currently *doing*, analyzing those *doings* as a means to *undo* collegiate athletics, and ultimately offering ways to *redo* collegiate athletics. The *redoing* of collegiate athletics will always be a *doing*, which explains why this is a tale with no end. The goal of post-qualitative methodology is not to solve problems or answer questions, but to trouble structural conditions by raising additional questions and concerns.

Knowledge of post-theories creates the basis for productive analysis to unsettle phenomena such as collegiate athletics and therefore poststructural views of language, subjectivity, and power have all helped produce the analytical questions which guided my analysis troubling the existence of athletics in higher education.

### **Contributions to the Literature: *Undoing* Collegiate Athletics**

My contribution to the literature is in the form of my theoretical analysis of collegiate athletics. In the preceding realist and conceptual tales, readers have encountered three aspects of the recent UNC scandal which served as the basis for my inquiry into collegiate athletics: Willingham's experience as a tutor in the Academic Support Program for Athletes (ASPA), the complicity of the African/Afro-American Studies Department and its Chair, Julius Nyang'oro, and the marginalization and exploitation of student athletes.

As poststructural theory and post-qualitative methodology helped shape the questions which guided my analysis of collegiate athletics using textual resources from the recent UNC scandal, an intertwining of theory and method helped show me how to *undo* collegiate athletics. Through a philosophically informed thinking about the current *doings* of collegiate athletics revealed in the literature (Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011; Nixon, 2014; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010), I crafted analytical questions designed to problematize the current state of collegiate athletics. Thus, the theory and method of my study worked together by showing me how I could trouble the field of collegiate athletics in ways that collegiate athletics could be done differently or how it might come *undone*. Cast as my contribution to the research, the conceptual tales presented as part of my dissertation utilized theoretical concepts of Spivak and Butler and represent my way of *undoing* collegiate athletics.

### ***Undoing Collegiate Athletics with Spivak***

The foundation of my analysis was established through Spivak's (1993) concept of the teaching machine and my similar seeing of collegiate athletics as the athletic machine. My viewing of big-time college sports programs as the athletic machine led me to the first analytical question of my study as follows:

- How can the viewing of big-time sports programs as the athletic machine disrupt the acceptance of athletics in higher education?

Through positioning collegiate athletics as the athletic machine, I was able to see the many ways the athletic machine functions to marginalize individuals in its path as exemplified by Willingham's ostracization from the university, the African/Afro-American Studies Department's susceptibility to corruption, and the exploitation of student athletes. The presence of athletics on college campuses is viewed as an accepted way of life or the status



quo. The aim of my analysis has been to problematize the easy acceptance of athletics in higher education and to disrupt the positioning of student athletes as students first and athletes second through the deliberate naming of athletes as student athletes. Also, my analysis revealed how the athletic machine quickly marginalizes individuals and pushes them inside and outside the system based on how the machine satisfies its need for profit and growth.

My second analytical question focused on Spivak's (1993) concept of marginality and extended her idea of *outside in* to the context of college sports programs as follows:

- How can the concept of marginality be used to see how individuals are *outside in* the athletic machine?

To recall, Spivak (1993) described *outside in* as the double existence of individuals who reside *in* structures like colleges and universities, while also falling *outside* those structures through their opposition of institutional policies and practices. To see how individuals are *outside in* the university's athletic machine, I examined three groups from the recent UNC scandal: Willingham, the African/Afro American Studies Department, and student athletes. These groupings helped me to deconstruct how individuals are marginalized by the operations of the athletic machine. Returning to Spivak's (1993) question of "what need is satisfied" by the operations of the teaching machine, and in this case, the athletic machine, I analyzed the ways UNC's athletic machine functions to marginalize individuals to "satisfy its need" for profit and victory. For example, Willingham's episode of whistleblowing epitomizes how the athletic machine constantly makes and re-makes individuals to meet its needs. Willingham inhabited the university as an academic tutor for athletes, but was also *outside* the university through her disapproval of the deceptive tactics to maintain the

eligibility of academically struggling athletes. After Willingham's whistleblowing about the compromise of academic integrity to satisfy the need for sustained player eligibility, she was ostracized by the university and labeled as a traitor and a liar. Ultimately, she was pushed *outside* the university's borders when she resigned from UNC due to the university's retaliation for her speaking out about the manipulation of academic eligibility for athletes.

My search for the ways the athletic machine marginalizes individuals led me to see how universities normalize the presence of athletics in higher education and to further question how and why collegiate athletics *does* what it *does*. This easy acceptance of academics and athletics in higher education pushed me to disrupt the *doings* of collegiate athletics utilizing Butler's (1993) theoretical concept of mattering.

### ***Undoing Collegiate Athletics with Butler***

I employed Butler's (1993) concept of mattering as a means to problematize the current *doings* of collegiate athletics in higher education by looking more deeply into the ways the athletic machine constructs bodies for specific purposes. The first analytical question prompted by my thinking with Butler is:

- In the field of collegiate athletics, and more specifically in the UNC scandal, how do bodies emerge as those that matter—and why?

The point of Butler's (1993) concept of mattering is to bring forward those bodies that do not matter or those that do not matter in the same way as some bodies so that we may think more deeply about how and why those other bodies do not matter. In other words, the preceding analytical question helped draw attention to the harsh reality that all bodies do not matter in the same way and helped me question how and why those bodies do not matter in the same way. Some bodies, especially Black college athletes—a focal point of this study,

may matter, but not for the reasons they may want to matter. Black college athletes matter to colleges and universities for the labor they can provide to generate revenue (ticket sales, television revenues, merchandise sales, sponsorships, and donations) for the university. Butler (1993) theorized that individuals are shaped by “a norm one never chooses, a norm that chooses us, but which we occupy, reverse, resignify to the extent that the norm fails to determine us completely” (pp. 126-127) and I similarly note that as the face of college sports, Black athletes are also marked by a norm they did not choose, but one that chooses them as those that matter in ways that serve the university by generating revenue and publicity. Pointing out the ways that bodies only matter for certain reasons is a way of *undoing* collegiate athletics by troubling how and why certain bodies come to matter more than others and for different purposes. My analysis of the ways bodies come to matter in college sports has revealed that race plays a pivotal role in the mattering of bodies and accordingly helped me shape the following analytical question:

- How can the concept of mattering disrupt the acceptance of racism as a commonality in collegiate athletics?

In this section of my analysis that focused on Black college athletes and addressed how the concept of mattering could lead to a disruption of racism as a commonality in college sports and higher education, I made the case for how Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) both informs and supports Butler’s (1993) concept of mattering. My response to why Critical Race Theory was a necessary component to my analysis of collegiate athletics using Butler’s concept of mattering is: Critical Race Theory was *always already* in Butler’s concept of mattering. The ways race marks how bodies matter in the world has always been fundamental to an investigation into why some bodies matter more

than others. To lay out the claim that both the bodies and minds of Black athletes are devalued in collegiate athletics, I utilized examples from the recent UNC scandal to draw attention to how the bodies of Black athletes only mattered for capitalist gain and also how the minds of athletes did not matter in the same way.

I continued my analysis by pointing out how racial norms of both abundance and lack plague young male athletes as athletically proficient and academically deficient, and in so doing, I characterized these dominant ways of thinking as racism in the field of collegiate athletics.

### **Racism in Collegiate Athletics**

Butler (1990/2006) noted that, “The cultural associations of mind with masculinity and body with femininity are well documented in the field of philosophy and feminism” (p. 17). Interestingly, in the field of collegiate athletics, there is a disassociation of the mind with the male athlete and a strong re-association with the body or physicality. Accordingly as the majority of male athletes in the profit sports are African American, this dissertation study has led me to see that this strong connection of physicality with the male athlete in collegiate and professional sports and a detachment with intellectualism is based on racial assumptions of athletic superiority and intellectual inferiority. Following Butler’s (1993) theorizing of race as both “a prohibition and a regulation” (p. 181), I can now see that universities use race as a mark to prohibit athletes from obtaining a college education while also regulating the ways in which athletes can participate in college sports and activities.

Hawkins (2010) observed that the racial narrative of America is modeled in college sports by describing it as “a microcosm of the larger society ... a barometer for racial progress” (p. 10). The disproportionate amount of Black college athletes in the profit sports

in comparison to overall student body demographics as predominantly White further illustrates the division of race in college sports and higher education, and thus, shows a lack of racial progress in the spaces races can occupy. Many institutions are aptly labeled, predominantly white institutions (PWI) based on this opposite mirroring of race at colleges and universities as demonstrated by the imbalance of race in chiefly White student bodies, faculty, and staff. The dominance of the profit sports (football and basketball) by predominantly Black athletes raises the question of how race plays into the recruitment and treatment of athletes in higher education. In my analysis, I focused on how and why bodies of Black athletes come to matter to universities using specific situations from the recent UNC scandal. College sports is racially configured similar to historical societal norms of racial organization where Whites take on roles of management and leadership and Blacks assume positions of labor and service. Collegiate athletics represents this history through the scarcity of Black coaches, university administrators, and students and the prevalence of Black athletes. I perceive this historic correlation to be what Butler (1993) described as “the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment” (p. 232). That is, America’s history of regulating Black bodies to specific places is repeated on the athletic fields of college campuses. Black bodies are relegated to their labor on the university’s athletic fields for the entertainment and gain of a mostly White audience. In this way, collegiate athletics presents a canvas for the re-painting and repeating of the nation’s racial history in a new context.

In the preceding sections, I explained how the analytical questions that guided my study generated how to *undo* collegiate athletics and I used this analysis as a means to think about ways to *redo* collegiate athletics. The implications of my study arose from my

conceptual analysis of the recent UNC scandal and are constructed as my recommendations for *redoing* collegiate athletics.

### **Implications: *Redoing* Collegiate Athletics**

As an educational leader myself, I recognize that there are numerous implications that stem from this analysis of collegiate athletics such as: escalating athletic expenditures, admissions standards, the need for improved developmental reading and math programs, additional time for degree completion, and the potential consequences of the creation of minor leagues for football and basketball. I view these noted implications as suggestions for ways to *redo* collegiate athletics and with that goal in mind, I overview the following recommended policy and structural changes applicable to educational leadership in colleges and universities which house big-time sports programs.

#### **Escalating Athletic Expenditures**

Despite the fact that federal and state support for academics continues to decrease, most universities with big-time sports programs are trapped in an endless cycle of multi-million dollar athletic budgets, coined as the “financial arms race” by Branch (2011, p. 15), which references a keeping up with the Big Time Universities (BTUs) of college sports (Clotfelter, 2011). Each time another university renovates their facilities, adds more seats, more luxury boxes, or especially builds an entirely new facility, competing colleges feel compelled (forced) to escalate their own sports program and facilities, to raise the ante. Collegiate sports is plagued by insatiable greed as the financial arms race always demands better coaches, superior athletes, and bigger stadiums (facilities) (Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011; Nixon, 2014; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010).

*Redoing* collegiate athletics could lead to educational leaders looking beyond profit, success, and athletic supremacy to see how the athletic spotlight overshadows the importance of academics/education on college campuses. I propose this shift in thinking or *redoing* of collegiate athletics could be a move toward the collegiate model of athletics over the present commercial model of athletics as distinguished by Nixon (2014). The present way of *doing* collegiate athletics follows the commercial model where the goal is to maximize profit and generate championships. The advised *redoing* of collegiate athletics would alter the current ways collegiate athletics is *done* by focusing on the educational mission of the institution, the academics, as suggested below in how the admission policies of institutions create opportunities to either follow the commercial model or the collegiate model of athletics.

### **Admissions Standards**

Decidedly, there are many challenges facing educational leaders trying to balance academics and athletics on college campuses, which includes maintaining the necessary rigor in academic standards for admission, coursework, and graduation, while also building athletic teams capable of securing wins and championships. Returning to the literature reviewed in “Chapter 2: A Critical Tale: The Paradoxes of Academics and Athletics in Higher Education,” collegiate athletics began in Ivy League schools. Presently, Ivy League schools no longer stand atop the football rankings as they have taken a back seat to the successful football powerhouses consumed with commerciality such as television revenues and ticket sales. Yost (2010) connects this reversal of ascendancy to the privileging of the athletic over the academic by saying “the Ivy League actually expects its athletes to be students first and athletes second” (p. 64). Colleges and universities that have emerged as powerhouses face a double-bind trying to balance academic and athletic admissions

standards. In other words, colleges and universities want to maintain high academic admissions standards for students and high athletic standards for athletes. In opposition to the ways colleges and universities emerge as those that matter through their big-time sports programs, athletes are relegated to mattering only for ways that help colleges and universities matter through the success of their big-time sports programs. Unfortunately, many athletes do not meet both academic and athletic admissions standards of colleges and universities. Administrative leaders are faced with a dilemma, whether to compromise on academic standards or athletic standards. When colleges and universities choose to put athletics first, the result is often the admission of academically underprepared athletes. The admission of athletes lacking a sufficient academic background to succeed in college courses results in subsequent quandaries for institutions such as how to keep academically unsuccessful athletes at the institution and academically eligible to play on the court or field. As previously stated, most Ivy League schools have chosen not to compromise academic standards and thus sacrifice being atop the rankings of the elite big-time sports programs. A question for educational leaders is if it is possible to start to put academics in front of athletics, while also being content with the lack of nationally competitive athletic programs.

### **Improved Developmental Reading and Math Programs**

An additional suggestion is for colleges and universities to greatly enhance remedial/developmental reading and math programs for athletes admitted under special talent clauses who lack the necessary academic preparation to start college-level coursework. Most big-time universities are ill-equipped to handle students in need of remediation prior to entry-level college courses due to the fact the high academic standards for admission normally result in the admission of students with strong academic backgrounds. A comprehensive



developmental studies program is critical for the academic success of athletes admitted without the necessary academic background to immediately enter college-level courses. Rather than a pass-them-through mentality, athletes should be offered the opportunity to receive the required remediation to ensure the possibility of an authentic college education.

### **Additional Time for Degree Completion**

Based on this previous suggestion, I foresee the need to extend the amount of time athletes are granted to complete their college degrees. For example, if athletic scholarships cover four years at the university, athletes admitted under special talent clauses should be allowed a minimum of one additional year to compensate for the time needed to advance into college-level coursework. Another more radical idea would be to award athletes an unlimited amount of time to return to the university to finish their college education.

To aid in an athlete's ability to complete an academic degree within the traditional four-year timeframe, a reduction of off-season sport and practice obligations is recommended. Although according to NCAA regulations, mandatory off-season practices are not allowed, optional practice sessions or "camps" are permitted. This loophole is way for colleges and universities to hold mandatory practice sessions under the guise of not being required.

### **The Creation of Minor League Sports for Football and Basketball**

A more far-reaching recommendation would be for educational leaders at colleges and universities to contemplate holding fast to academic standards for admission, while opening the door for the creation of minor league systems for football and basketball similar to baseball's minor league system, also known as the "farm system." It could be argued that colleges and universities already exist as the minor league system for professional sports. The

naming of baseball minor league system as the “farm system” similarly relates to how colleges and universities “raise” and “grow” athletes for the professional leagues. A potential concern for the development of such minor league systems is the decrease of individuals entering the higher education system. As illuminated in this dissertation, collegiate athletics, particularly the profit sports, is already predominantly marked by the Black male athlete as the face of college sports. Therefore, minor league systems for football and basketball could further reduce the number of Black males seeking post-secondary degrees. If a large percentage of Black males enrolled in big-time universities are athletes, an alternate path to professional sports via the minor league systems over colleges and universities could further deter Black males from the pursuit of higher education. As most higher education institutions already have predominantly White student bodies and leadership, I am disturbed by the potential aspect to create a greater racial imbalance in higher education.

The ways education is not universally accessible or affordable based on socioeconomic status and academic standards is linked to the current stratification of society. This further illustrates how higher education institutions are structured in ways that marginalize and exploit Black males, especially Black male athletes.

### **Research Limitations: Additional Opportunities for the *Undoing* of Collegiate Athletics**

#### **Study Limitations**

My study of collegiate athletics used textual resources from the recent UNC scandal as the basis for my analysis. Some may view the analysis of a single scandal as a limitation of this study, yet, I argue that the use of smaller chunks of material or data resulted in much richer analysis than an attempt to include the details of multiple scandals in collegiate athletics. This post-qualitative study is an endeavor of depth over breadth. Thus, this study

only covered three primary groups involved in the UNC scandal: Willingham, the African/Afro-American Studies Department, and student athletes.

My dissertation study focused on the profit sports (men's football and basketball) in collegiate athletics. I concentrated on the profit sports as the paradoxes of academics and athletics are most prevalent in the ways colleges and universities privilege revenues generated by athletics over academic integrity. Likewise, Black male athletes are highlighted as part of my analysis, as they are disproportionately the face of collegiate athletics, while the face of higher education is overwhelmingly White.

Based on my emphasis on male athletes, the lack of attention to female athletes could be considered a limitation of this study. Rather than a limitation, I view this an opportunity for another thought-provoking endeavor beyond my current analysis: to study how female athletes and big-time sports programs intersect to allow female athletes to stay on the sidelines and play a distant second in the distribution of resources, publicity, and focus compared to their male counterparts. It is not my intent to further privilege and promote male collegiate athletics over female athletic programs in this study<sup>17</sup>. I focused on male athletes in my analysis as they are the primary subjects of the UNC scandal. However, I also considered how other individuals of both genders such as academic specialists (tutors), administrators, faculty, staff, and students are also subjected to the churnings of the athletic machine. In the UNC scandal, male athletes in the revenue sports, football and basketball, are exploited for their athletic ability while limiting their intellectual potential by restricting their access to real academic courses. While there is a privileging of male sports programs, I suggest that there is

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<sup>17</sup>Only in rare cases do female athletic programs rise and take prominence over those for male athletes. Successful women's basketball programs at the University of Tennessee and University of Connecticut are examples of this rare eclipse of female athletic programs over the male programs. These women's basketball programs are indeed the exception in Division I sports fueled by revenue, fanatical obsessions, and competitive drive feeding into professional sports programs.

also a reverse privileging (a de-privileging) in the profit sports. It is the sport and profit that are privileged and valued in college sports, while athletes' bodies are simply a means to this end. It is not the athletes themselves who are privileged or valued in the profit sports as new athletes are in constant supply. In this sense, athletes are compelled to perform as those hoping to achieve the same level of status afforded to the profit sports and the elite big-time universities.

### **Researcher Limitations**

Through repeated readings of theory, Spivak (2014) noted that “the theory transforms you” (p. 77) and in this way at times when writing this dissertation, I found it difficult to explain the precise theoretical concept associated with my ideas because the theory had become part of the way I think. Also, the critical thinking process necessary to immerse myself in both the theory and the textual resources adds to the complexity of explaining the ways in which the thinking and the analysis unfolded in my dissertation. The blending of both theory and method in a post-framework does not follow a linear step-by-step process that can easily be explained in a clear order, because post-inquiry is to be caught up in the messiness. This messiness is a means to “make a mess” of the orderly, accepted ways things are in the world. In the case of collegiate athletics, my aim has been to create trouble in the field of collegiate athletics so that the presence of athletics in higher education may no longer be accepted as just the way it is or the status quo.

Only by resisting the pull to cover all of the what's of the various scandals in college sports was I able to probe deeper to unravel the how's and why's that created the UNC scandal with an aim that collegiate athletics may come *undone*. During the dissertation process, I struggled at times trying to cover everything about collegiate athletics and the

UNC scandal, in particular. I was perhaps caught in the trappings of traditional qualitative research, which has become marked by many quantitative research features, where breadth is favored over depth. The work of breadth (trying to cover everything or find out all there is to “know” about a topic) results in shallow surface work where the what’s of the events are covered without delving, diving, or digging into the how’s and why’s of the conditions and structures that lay the foundation for the growth of scandal and fraud surrounding athletics or profits sports in higher education. To expose the embedded structures rooted in history and long-held ideals of the way things are or the way things are supposed to be, the status quo, is the difficult work of depth.

### **Recommendations for Future Inquiry: More Ways to *Undo* Collegiate Athletics**

This present tale is called “A Tale With No End” as a way to recognize that although this tale may come to an end as the conclusion to my dissertation project, all of the tales in this study open up the way for more and more conceptual tales about collegiate athletics. In this section, I present my recommendations for future inquiry in this same spirit as further ways to shape tales to *undo* collegiate athletics.

### **New Conceptual Tales**

The purpose of post-qualitative inquiry is to raise additional questions and problems, not to solve the problem of collegiate athletics in higher education. Most literature (Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011; Nixon, 2014; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010) about collegiate athletics details what is happening in collegiate athletics, the *doings*, but fails to dig deeper into how and why collegiate athletics is *doing* what it *does*. When studies of collegiate athletics do explore the hows and whys of what collegiate athletics is *doing*, they do not view collegiate athletics through a theoretical lens. While there are many critiques of collegiate

athletics (Branch, 2011; Clotfelter, 2011; Nixon, 2014; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Yost, 2010), poststructural critiques combining different philosophical concepts do not exist. My interrogation of the paradoxes of academics and athletics in higher education utilizing both the concepts of Spivak and Butler is unique as it takes three aspects from the textual resources about the recent UNC scandal and views it through different theoretical lenses. Because the conceptual configurations that could be created to study collegiate athletics are endless, my study involving concepts from Spivak and Butler are two of many ways to combine and apply different theoretical concepts as a way of analyzing an educational topic of interest and concern. An opportunity for future inquiry is to take other concepts from Butler, Spivak, or other theorists and develop a new analysis of big-time college sports. For example, it would be interesting to see what a Foucauldian knowledge/power or genealogical study would generate toward a goal of changing the way athletics is currently *done* in higher education.

### **Critical Race Theory**

In my study, I discussed some of the ways Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) both informs and supports Butler's (1993) theory of mattering in my study. The interplay of both theories illuminated how race plays a critical role in the mattering of bodies. In college sports, the presence of racism is normalized and accepted as common, everyday practice. Society has low motivation to address issues and occurrences of racism within college athletics due to the reaping of personal and financial benefits to the ruling race and class. Overwhelmingly universities profit from the unpaid labor of athletes posed as students. These supposed student athletes are predominantly Black and of lower socioeconomic status. To further see how racial norms taint the field of collegiate athletics,

the central tenets of CRT: the normalization of racism, material determinism, interest convergence, and differential racialization, could be further explored to see the fruitful depth of these tenets. Based on the disproportionality of Black male athletes in the profit sports in comparison to predominantly White student bodies and leadership at colleges and universities, further studies, like Hawkins (2010), utilizing Critical Race Theory are crucial to a continued problematization of the current *doings* in field of collegiate athletics, especially toward the racialization of the Black male body as athletically superior and intellectually inferior.

The productive tensions of a philosophical study of race is exemplified in *Racial Imperatives: Discipline, Performativity, and Struggles Against Subjection* by Ehlers (2012), where she combines theories of race with Butler's (1990/2006, 1993) ideas about subjectivity and performativity and Foucault's (1975/1995) views on discipline to study how race can be performative. Ehlers (2012) takes the historical case of Rhinelander v. Rhinelander (1925), where a husband files for an annulment of marriage based on a claim of racial fraud of his wife's deliberate attempt to pass as white, to study how individuals are constituted as racial subjects.

### **Additional Readings**

Ahmed's (2012) discussion of diversity in higher education in her book, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, represents another possible direction of the further examination of collegiate athletics. The ways Ahmed (2012) sees the use of language as a tool to mask what universities are not doing by giving the illusion they are fulfilling university objectives provides another way of seeing collegiate athletics. Universities use terms like student athlete to cover over the ways athletics overshadows

academics at institutions. Additional readings for future inquiry also include Ferguson's (2012) *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*, which provides a new perspective on how interdisciplinary academic departments such as race, gender, queer, and ethnic studies were formed in academia and how those departments are positioned in the university landscape.

### **Concluding Thoughts on the *Doing*, *Undoing*, and *Redoing* of Collegiate Athletics**

#### **Writing as Protest: Research Reflections on *Undoing* Collegiate Athletics**

Let this analysis not be misheard as silence or as a failed attempt to bring attention to the hegemonic and normalizing practices within collegiate athletics or as a dividing effort. The writing of this critique is itself a form of protest, standing against the normalizing practices within collegiate athletics that leave student athletes as a marginalized population. Butler (2015) states that "when lives are considered ungrievable, to grieve them openly is protest" (p. 6). I concur with her statement and extend it to posit that when lives are thought not to matter and the non-mattering of lives is normalized, to state otherwise is yet another form of protest. By arranging this protest in the form of this critique is an attempt to reclaim the space of higher education for its intended purpose of education, to educate all people for the good of society. The term, higher education, can also be viewed as the means by which individuals move up the socio-economic ladder, as education is viewed as the path to increased social and economic capital. By reestablishing education as the priority and purpose of colleges and universities and pushing athletics to the sidelines into their rightful spot, the balance in higher education can be redistributed.

In its purity or pure form, college sports can exist as an opportunity for young adults to attend college, participate in intercollegiate competitive sports, earn a college education,



and secure a successful career and post-collegiate life. Yet, in its current form, collegiate athletics has been tainted by capitalism and greed resulting in the exploitation of athletes, the manipulation of academic standards, a complete loss of integrity, and a misguided moral compass. In this project, my aim has been not to eliminate or remove collegiate athletics from higher education. Rather, my purpose has been to generate new knowledge in an effort toward the transformation and change of the ways academics and athletics inhabit higher education institutions. Through my thinking with both Spivak and Butler about how collegiate athletics is currently *done*, I have seen the machine-like operations of big-time sports programs, the marginalization of individuals, the performative demands of college sports, the struggling of bodies to matter, and ultimately the devaluation of Black athletes' lives.

As my dissertation may not generate sweeping policy changes or a complete overhaul of big-time sports programs, my goal is that all who read this work will never view collegiate athletics as they did before. My probing examination and critique of the current state of collegiate athletics has forever changed how I see academics and athletics in higher education and has taught me to no longer accept athletics as an integral part of higher education, but to trouble the status quo of collegiate athletics as just the way it is. I have not only unraveled the past and current state of collegiate athletics, and in particular the UNC scandal, but I have also come *undone* in the process. By *undone*, I describe not only the ways my thinking has changed about academics and athletics in higher education, but most significantly, how my general thinking has completely transformed based on my reading and knowledge of theory, such as that presented in this study. An example of my own *undoing* relevant to my dissertation studies is how "thinking with" Butler (Yancey & Butler, 2015)

has equipped me and urged me toward social justice. Butler (Yancey & Butler, 2015) remarked that “whiteness inflects all those frameworks within which certain lives are made to matter less than others” (p. 9). My dissertation study has drawn attention to the field of collegiate athletics and the ways that some bodies matter more than others, more specifically, how Black bodies do not matter in the same ways as White bodies. Pointing out some of the reasons why race plays a critical role in how bodies come to matter is a step toward helping others see and *do* race differently. As a White female born and raised in the Southern United States, my upbringing was marked by deep prejudice in relation to both race and gender. My reading and immersion in poststructural theory has changed my thinking about race and gender. Poststructuralism has armed me with the necessary weapons to contest stereotypical views of race and gender in my daily life, both personally and professionally. My own *undoing* represents the possibilities for us all to open ourselves up to a transformed thinking about the world around us by seeing and *doing* race and gender differently. My ultimate aim of this work is that all who read this dissertation will question the hows and whys of the structural conditions in the world and specific to this project, my goal is that you will always question: What *does* collegiate athletics *do*? How and why *does* collegiate athletics *do* what it *does*?

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### **Vita**

Star Brown is a native North Carolinian. She received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree in Accounting, a Master of Science degree in Accounting, an Educational Specialist degree in Higher Education, Administration, and a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership, all from Appalachian State University.

She has served as a community college faculty member and administrator for the past 20 years. Currently, she serves in the role of Department Head, responsible for the oversight of eight academic programs and the supervision of related faculty members.

Additionally, she has led two major accreditation efforts, including the decennial reaffirmation of accreditation and the declaration of an off-campus instructional site through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Both accreditation projects produced the exceptional result of no findings or recommendations.

Based on the exposure to philosophical works by Foucault, Spivak, and Butler during the course of her doctoral studies, she has developed an interest in how poststructural theory can be used to analyze topics of concern in the educational landscape. Her future plans include the pursuit of educational research in the field of post-qualitative inquiry with an emphasis on the promotion of social justice.